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APOLOGY

FOR THE

CHURCH,

WITH AN INQUIRY INTO THE

CONSTITUTION AND MINISTRY OF THE CONGREGATIONAL
SOCIETY :

BEING A REPLY TO

A RETROSPECT ON THE MINISTRY AND CHURCH OF
SAYBROOK.

BY REV. JOHN MARSHALL GUION,
RECTOR OF GRACE CHURCH, SAYBROOK.

" Believe not every spirit ; but try the spirits whether they are of God."
1 John, iv. i.

MIDDLETOWN:
PRINTED BY W. D. STARR.
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1834.

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JUN 10

CHURCH

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS OF THE CHURCH

A BIBLE STUDY FOR THE YOUTH AND ADULTS OF THE CHURCH

BY REV. JOHN W. BARNES, D.D.

Not a new book; but by the author of the "Bible for the People"



PHILADELPHIA
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PRELIMINARY REMARKS.



WITH deep regret, has my attention been directed to the perusal of a discourse, recently delivered in this village and since published, containing a most violent and unchristian assault upon that religious denomination among whom I minister, and especially upon the Church in this place : an attack at once unexpected and uncalled for. My *sincere regret* is excited, not so much by the simple circumstance that an assault has been made, as by the spirit and manner in which it has been thought proper to conduct it. I presume not to question any man's right to assert and maintain his principles wherever and whenever occasion offers : nor is it for me to judge his motives in so doing. If he can justify them to his conscience and his God, it is well. Nay, so far from lamenting that an attempt should be made to sustain what is *conscientiously* believed to be truth, and opposing what upon mature reflection and *diligent examination* appears to be error, so far from dis-esteeming him who undertakes it, it is with me a subject of satisfaction, to perceive that the adherents to any Christian system entertain more than a professed attachment to their distinctive principles ; that they are not willing to perpetuate these as so many grounds of division among Christians which, after all, they do not think worth contending for ; but considering them as of sufficient importance to justify a "schism in the body" of Christ, and to continue the disunion of those who bear his name ; they consider them sufficiently important too, to be proclaimed and maintained, and I honor the man who evinces the moral courage to breast the outcries of "bigotry" and "illiberality," with which many are ready to meet him, and who does not shrink from the duty, the imperious duty of assailing error and asserting truth, whenever its interests require it. Yet of the gentleman and the Christian, it is not unreasonable to expect, we have a right to require, that even error be assailed, and that truth be defended, in the manner of a gentleman and in the spirit of a Christian. I regret, sincerely and deeply regret, the manner and the spirit which characterized the undertaking referred to.

That the attack, and especially such an attack, was unprovoked and uncalled for, and therefore not to be expected, the discourse which contains it, will itself evince. Former animosities too, appeared to be subsiding. Enlightened reflection and Christian feeling *appeared* to be triumphing over the infirmities and prejudices, alas, too common to our nature. The “many trying sensations” which had been caused our assailant by the result of the defection “of some individuals of very honest zeal,” and “some of our opulent citizens,” had been much mitigated by a “fulness of the consolations of faith,” and an enjoyment of “the presence of God,” never before experienced by him. For myself, I cherished the hope, gratifying to my soul, that though differing in principle, we as laborers under the same divine Master, redeemed by the same blood, sanctified by the same Spirit, heirs of the same salvation, might walk together in Christian peace and charity; that our respective flocks would be characterized by that mutual harmony and love, which above all profession and zeal, is the essential feature in the Christian character. Alas, how sadly have these fond anticipations been blighted—ungenerously, unnecessarily blighted. “Never, (says our assailant,) have I enjoyed so much and so constantly the presence of God and the fullness of the consolations of faith, as in the year which now closes my half century service.” “There seems (says he), but little diminution of strength in sustaining the Congregational form of worship,” even “with all this schism” of “some of our opulent citizens,” and “some individuals of very honest zeal,” which “has caused me many trying sensations.” “The *union* and *firmness* of my Church,” “their unshaken and unwavering stability in the faith, the affectionate attachment of *the people* to my ministry, with the distinguished constancy and steadfastness of our dear youth in Church and Society, these considerations have greatly strengthened me.” Again, “our house is usually *well filled*! and not unfrequently *TO OVERFLOWING*!! None, so far as I can learn, utter the *least complaint*, nor *feel* any *additional burden of expense*. It is believed there never was *more harmony, union, and cheerful co-operation*.” Now all these circumstances, be it remembered, have occurred since the establishment of the Episcopal Church in this place, and are to be combined as a part of the result of the “schism.” Up to the very period of that deplorable event, “we had been,” says the author of the Retrospect, “an unusually united people in all our ecclesiastical concerns,” “a united flock,” and “rapidly growing Church”—and “there never was,” he remarks, “more harmony, union and cheerful co-operation in all ecclesiastical con-

cerns than at the time" subsequent to the same event. "Never has he enjoyed so much and so constantly, the presence of God and the fullness of the consolations of faith, as in the year which closed his half century service," a year coincident almost with the first year's residence of an Episcopal Rector in the parish. Verily these "honest individuals" of "the Methodist class," these "opulent" friends of the Episcopal Church appear to have been thus far a very harmless portion of the community, and hardly deserving the maledictions of their "highly favored" assailant. While they continued to associate with their Congregational *brethren*, they were together an *unusually united* people; and when in the exercise of their unquestionable rights and in obedience to the dictates of their consciences, they presumed to renounce what they deemed error, and to conform as they supposed to Gospel principles, these "honest individuals," these "opulent citizens" do not appear to have disturbed the peace, or at all to have prejudiced the interests of "the ancient Church." The "*schism*," the terrible "schism" has occurred, but the same "almost unparalleled union," and "harmony and cheerful co-operation" continue uninterrupted. "Some of our opulent citizens" have forsaken the Church of the Puritan Fathers, but in sustaining its form of worship, not "the least complaint is uttered, nor any burden of expense felt," by those who remain. Nay, a blessing has accompanied "this schism." "Although we have now two houses of worship within our local boundaries," still it is asserted, the Congregational "house is usually *well filled* and not unfrequently to *overflowing*." With "a house well filled and overflowing," with "an unusually united people," "feeling no additional burden of expense," was it kind, was it generous, was it Christianlike, was it manlike in an individual so "strengthened," to turn and revile a few harmless schismatics, whose chief crime it was, that the "honest" class adopted "Wesleyan sentiments," and the "opulent" portion, have gone over to a "Prelatical Church." When he found, that the anticipated terrors of the frightful event were not realized, could he find no other method of giving vent to the grateful emotions of his soul, than by denouncing those who had neither injured him nor his cause? Was not the assault uncalled for, one not to be expected? O yes it was called for, it should have been expected: it is generous and manly and christian, as will be seen in the sequel.

The easy task of disproving the statements, refuting the arguments, and repelling the unjust aspersions of the discourse under consideration, is undertaken, not without reluctance. Reverence for

the age—veneration for the religious character of its author, would deter me from placing myself in an attitude of even *apparent* hostility towards him. Regard to the feelings of his respectable and respected parishioners, would constrain me to utter nothing, which might be construed into an uncharitable reflection upon them, even by the most censorious. But a sense of duty to the people of my charge and to the Church of my Redeemer, impels me to the course which is here adopted. The interests of that Church demand a prompt reply, a vindication of her character from the reproaches of her unprovoked assailant, a refutation of the assertions and of the attempts at argument, by which he would seek to harm her—while it is our inestimable privilege, that we possess a certain standard of truth to which we can appeal, it is no less our duty, than our privilege to have recourse to it. An inspired Apostle directs, enjoins, commands us “believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.”* And especially is it the solemn and imperious duty of every person, who bears the office of a Christian Minister, a watchman over the house of Israel to “be ready with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away from the Church all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God’s word”†—“to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.”‡ Were I to pass over the attack which has been made upon the Church and its friends, I should deem myself faithless to the trust committed to my charge, and unworthy of the confidence of my flock. Trusting to their firm and united support, but especially to his whose protection is pledged to his Church, I cannot hesitate or shrink from the solemn obligation. Nor am I aware that this discharge of duty, necessarily involves any sacrifice of Christian charity or courtesy towards those who differ from us, or on their part, towards ourselves. At all events, we are not responsible for the results. We have neither sought nor provoked controversy. We act merely on the defensive. A most unchristian, uncharitable assault has been made upon our community, as malignant as it is feeble, and there remains no alternative, but abject submission or unreserved reply: tacit assent to the false charges alleged, or explicit denial and full refutation. We are challenged to the contest—and in the name of the Lord of Hosts, fearlessly is it undertaken. If offence must needs come, unto him belongs the wrong through whom the offence cometh.

Nor are the regrets which the recent attack has occasioned, un-

* 1 John, iv. 1.

† Ordination service.

‡ Jude 3.

qualified by the reflection that good will eventually result from it. He who stilleth the noise of the waves and the madness of the people, can make the wrath of man to praise him. Never since the time that "the blood of the Martyrs proved the seed of the Church," have the hostility and persecution of her opponents failed to promote her best interests : and I hail the recent *manifestation* of implacable enmity, as the commencement of a new era in the history of the apostolic Church, and of primitive truth and order in this place. Men, reflecting, candid men will be led to consider, as the "noble Bereans" perchance, to sacrifice prejudice, and with minds open to conviction, to "search the scriptures, whether these things are so" : to inquire not what is "the old Puritan faith and worship," but what is the faith and worship of the gospel ; not what is "the Church which the Puritan Fathers have established," but what the Church which Jesus Christ has built, upon the foundation of Apostles and Prophets, himself the chief corner stone." Not to be giving their minds to the inventions and "experiments" of men, although "tested for centuries *nearly*" : but to "stand in the ways and see and ask for *the old paths*, where is the good way and to walk therein, and thus find rest for their souls." There are some, it is lamentably true, so entrenched in prejudice and conceit, as to be proof against all conviction : whom neither Moses, nor the Prophets, nor the Gospel, nor one raised from the dead could persuade—who will cling to favorite errors, and "resist the truth," even at the hazard of their soul's salvation—such, it is to be expected, will care for none of these things. But there are those of honest minds, whose leading desire is to be guided right ; who can surrender opinions and interest also for the truth's sake,—who, though they may involuntarily have been led into an erroneous course, have only to understand the correct one, to be induced to adopt it : such, in reliance upon Divine Grace, have but to make the sincere, the prayerful endeavor to learn and do their duty, and theirs is the encouraging assurance "if any man will do the will of my Father, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." But to such, the caution is addressed "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God." Judging then of *the spirit* of the discourse under consideration, by the standard of God's word, with what character is it invested. Is it to be believed ?

There we find the old *slander* revived in the *false* representation of the "Prelatical Churches," by which terms we are at no loss to understand what is meant, of their not "requiring experimental religion and a change of heart to be the terms of Communion." Then the

contemplated establishment of an Episcopal Church is characterized as “opposition”—“a hostile and threatening appearance”—“a reason for apprehension of schism”—“a sundering of happy union”—a cloud threatening “the religious harmony and united order” which prevailed—“hostility to the divine influence”—“opposition to the finger of God and the work of grace.” The successful accomplishment of the undertaking is denounced as a work of Satan, involving an opposition to “spiritual influence and Christian harmony,” and together with the introduction of the sentiments of Wesley, the fervent labors and devoted zeal of the Methodists attributed to the invidious adversary. Do I misrepresent the language of the discourse, or misconstrue its application and meaning? No—I appeal to the *thing* itself, and if it do not more than sustain these assertions, let *me* be deemed the reckless calumniator.*

* Not to notice the scoffs and sneers with which the “half-century *Sermon*” is plentifully interlarded, the reader is referred to the closing remarks in the section which terminates in the middle of page 21—to the third and fourth sections on page 12—to the last three sections on page 13, and to the top of page 14. In the first case, he will be at no loss to understand what is meant by the “Prelatical Churches.” The terms, though in themselves quite unobjectionable, are the favorite expression of those who speak with derision of the Episcopal Church; nor is it difficult to comprehend the force of the inquiry in regard to the “prelatical Churches.” On page 12, the “*opposition*,” “*the hostile and threatening appearances*,” the “*reason for apprehension that a schism was forming*,” are all explained by the circumstance related in immediate connection with these expressions, that “subscription papers were issued to form an Episcopal Church; and thus sunder our happy union.” As the design was not immediately carried into effect, this fact is thus represented, “the cloud soon disappeared, and all things continued to proceed in apparently the same religious harmony and united order as before.” “The effusions of divine influence bore down all hostility; and a conviction that here was “*the finger of God*,” closed the lips of opposition.” “The work of grace uniformly advanced,” &c. The passage requires no comment. On page 13, after noticing “the overflowings of spiritual influence,” “the state of Christian harmony and sweet union in mind,” which continued up to the very moment of the terrible catastrophe, the writer observes, in his *classic* style, “Soon was I called to bitterly remember and realize what a fellow-laborer *pleasantly!* observed to me: “what, sir, do you think the adversary will do to you, when invidiously seeing you thus highly favored of the Lord, with a united flock and rapidly growing Church? Surely he will make an effort to raise a storm, and scatter the flock.” And now reader, in what manner do you suppose this *pleasant* observation was realized—in what did the *effort* of the *adversary* consist? Why, in the introduction of “Wesleyan sentiments,” “drawing over to the Methodist class, some individuals of very honest zeal,” and the organization of an *Episcopal Church*. These were the circumstances in which the *pleasant* observation was realized—these the circumstances which “blotted the page by disunion, and the rendings of deforming schism,” yes, even so, blotted a page with—rents. If we

In the most unqualified terms, in language to which no stretch of charity can give a more favorable construction, all those who have presumed to become "discontented with the ecclesiastical orderings of the day," and to withdraw from what they conscientiously deemed an unscriptural Church, are denounced, and especially are the friends of the Episcopal Church stigmatized as turbulent disorganizers, abettors of "hostility to the divine influence," of "opposition to the finger of God," the detestable, impious tools of "the adversary." Gracious Heaven! and has it then come to this, that in a land of boasted freedom of conscience, a number of persons may not assemble to worship their God and Redeemer, according to their own views of propriety, and the dictates of their own consciences, and the rule of the Gospel, without being stigmatized and denounced as foes of God, fellow-workers with Satan, and instruments of the adversary; and that too by one who holds the office of a Teacher in a Society, which "has been a great patron of free researches into truth"—"the unshaken friends of republican rights and privileges—in a land known as the seat of freedom"—by one claiming affinity with those who came here, and "established themselves for the free enjoyment of civil and religious privileges"—with those who were willing to endure so much, if, by their labors and sufferings, they could secure for themselves and their descendants, the quiet possession of republican privileges, and civil and religious liberty! O! is it not too much to hear a Church, which numbers among its members and firm supporters, a glorious company of Martyrs and Confessors, of men eminent for piety and every Christian virtue, and active in the benevolent enterprises of every age: a Cranmer and a Ridley, a Beveridge and a Horne, a Heber and a Hobart, a Wilberforce and a Nelson, and an unrivalled host of luminaries—is it not too much, to hear such a Church vilified and denounced, as the instrument of Satan, by any mere mortal, by one who is under the greatest obligations to her piety and zeal for the truth—who, when convenience and interest suited too, could extol her as a praise in

had not been assured, upon infallible testimony, of "the overflowings of spiritual influence," we might have suspected that very little was experienced by one who could contemplate and confidently predict such a melancholy event, with any thing like pleasantry—*THE ADVERSARY* introducing Wesleyan sentiments, and organizing an Episcopal Church. The pleasantry of the "fellow-laborer," was perhaps a little excusable, especially if he foresaw too, the manner in which the *effort* was to be made. The Devil turned Methodist preacher, and building Episcopal churches—a queer way of "raising the wind," almost as queer as to "blot a page with rents."

the earth ! Will public opinion indeed tolerate such a flagrant violation of common decency, to say nothing of Christian charity ?*

Let us "try the spirit," which dictated and breathes in this production, and who will say it is "the Spirit of Truth," and of the Gospel. Where do we find that spirit of charity, which "hopeth all things," "thinketh no evil," "vaunteth not itself," "is not puffed up"—that charity which is above all faith and hope ? Where is that spirit of love for the souls of men which, instead of regarding even the presumed errors of those who differ from us, with bitter feelings, mourns and grieves over them ? Compared with the spirit of a St. Paul, or a St. John, how little does it resemble the holy flame which warmed their breasts ? It savors, also, but little of the boasted "benevolent spirit," which we are assured has been so much manifested. It partakes rather of that malignant spirit, which instigated the Jews of old, when argument and Scripture failed them, to impute the divine works of our Lord to the agency of Beelzebub. It manifests the spirit of the Adversary. It is not to be trusted—it is not to be believed.

How very different from these denunciations, is the language of Dr. Dwight : "I cannot but remember," says he, "and remember with emotions of gratitude and respect, the very great and beneficial exertions made by the English [Episcopal] Church, in the cause of Christianity—and made, in many instances, by the dignitaries of that Church. Butler, Berkley, Jewell, Beveridge, Bedell, Wilson, were Bishops ; Cranmer, Leighton, and Usher, were Archbishops ; Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley were Martyrs. In that Church, also, real religion has, at times, flourished to a great and very desirable extent. Like other Churches, it has had its bright and dark days ; but it has undoubtedly, sent multitudes of its members to Heaven ;

* It is gratifying to learn, that so far from tolerating such an outrage, public opinion has most decidedly condemned it. Of this fact, the most satisfactory evidences have been furnished, during the preparation of this reply. The very friends and parishioners of the author of the Retrospect, have pronounced a most unqualified condemnation upon the spirit of the production. None, with but a very trifling exception none, have attempted to justify the objectionable expressions. They who endeavor to apologize for its author, do it in such terms as show the opinion they have of his qualifications for the office he bears, of guiding immortal souls in the way of life, and of instructing those under his charge, in the things that belong to their peace, and the honor of God. Among other attempts at extenuation, it is asserted, that "he did not mean what his language conveys." If this apology is correct, an opportunity is now furnished to retract the offensive expressions.—Were the others believed to be true, they would have forbidden this reply.


and, at the present time, is fast rising in the gradations of piety.”
 “Nor can I willingly adopt the severe aspersions sometimes thrown upon [Episcopacy] by individual Presbyterians.” (Dwight’s Theology, Sermon cli.)

To bring these preliminary remarks to a conclusion, I would merely add, that to those who are acquainted with the true state of things, it must be really amusing, to hear the Congregational Churches eulogized and extolled “as the *great patrons of free researches into truth*”—and especially so, as the encomium is applied to the Society in this village, when, under the wide heavens, in no place, have more arduous exertions been made—more glaring misrepresentations, and more gross calumnies circulated, to deter men from investigating and receiving the truth as it is in Jesus, than in this very quarter. But far be it from me, by seeming reproach, to embitter the minds of any. Solemnly do I disavow all uncharitable feelings towards those who differ from us; and did I not believe, that more solid peace and mutual good will, with the glory of God, would be ultimately promoted, I would refrain from uttering another sentence upon the present subject. With those from whom we differ, I hope to meet in the Church triumphant above. My heart’s desire and prayer is, that we might walk together in love and harmony in the Church militant on earth.

CONSTITUTION

OF THE

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.



The spirit of the attack which calls forth these remarks, having been noticed, some idea may be formed of the proportion of truth and of error, which might reasonably be expected to accompany it. Let us then, turn our consideration to the arguments by which alone it can be justified. For it is freely admitted, that if the denomination of Christians therein represented, as being the Church which "Jesus Christ established"—"the Church built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the Chief corner stone"—"the purest sample of the primitive Church, that is now in the world,"—if the Congregational Church be all that is here represented, it is freely conceded, that the bitterness with which we have been assailed, admits of some palliation; and that the assailant had some reason for representing the endeavor to establish the Episcopal Church as a *hostile* undertaking, an *opposition* threatening *schism*, *hostility to the finger of God*, *opposition to the work of Grace*, and an *effort of the adversary* to raise a storm. Of *Christians* indeed, of those who had imbibed the spirit of their Master, we might have expected their pity and compassion for our grievous error—not their denunciations and contempt. Let us then, attend to the arguments advanced, and see how far they go to substantiate the high claims here asserted.

But before proceeding with these, there are two facts, incontrovertible facts, set forth in the "Retrospect," which, in the very outset, present a serious, an insurmountable obstacle, to the force of any argument whatever; which must prove fatal to any claim of the Congregational Church, to one essential characteristic of that Evangelic Church, instituted under divine appointment. In the words of "the judicious Hooker," we challenge the advocates of Con-

gregationalism, before we can assent to their claims, we require them to find out *but one Church upon the face of the whole Earth*, that hath been *ordered by their discipline*, or hath not been ordered by ours; that is to say, by Episcopal government, since the time that the blessed Apostles were here conversant, down to the sixteenth century. In the language of Tertullian, we say, “let them *produce the original of their Churches*—let them show the *order of their Bishops*, that by their succession, we may see *whether their first Bishop had any of the Apostles or apostolic men*, who did likewise persevere, with the Apostles *for his founder and predecessor*.” Christ has built his Church “upon the foundation of Apostles and Prophets.” The Congregational Churches, it is admitted, were established by the Puritan Fathers. Our Lord declared, that against this Church the gates of Hell should not prevail; but that she should continue “always, even unto the end of the world.” Congregationalism is an experiment of less than two centuries. Is it not strange, that such an “organized Church and ministry,” should have been directed by the example of Christ, and the apostolic Churches; should be taught in the word of God, and no Church have found it out, nor received it until so very recently? Can an institution of such little antiquity, be that divine appointment which was to continue from apostolic days to the end of time? Can an institution, built upon the foundation of John Robinson* and the Puritan Fathers, be indeed identified with that Church to which were given *Apostles and Prophets*, and Pastors, and Teachers? And has the promise of Christ failed? and have all the glorious throng of Saints, and Martyrs, and confessors, who, for the truth and the Gospel’s sake, did not count their lives dear unto them—have all the pious and the faithful that have lived and died, from the days of Clement, to those of Robinson and Congregationalism, been without the fold of the Redeemer and the Church of Christ; and without the possibility of finding it, and gaining admission? Yes—revolting as is the conclusion, it is inevitable, if the Church of the Puritan Fathers, the experiment of two centuries, be indeed the Church which “Jesus Christ established.”

Within the limits of a single discourse, devoted too, to the variety of interesting topics, which might be supposed to engage the attention of the preacher and hearers of a half century sermon, it were unreasonable to expect, that much of the argumentative would find a place. But if arguments were admitted upon any topic, we might

* The founder of the Congregational Sect.

reasonably suppose, that the most prominent and the most conclusive would be produced. We may therefore, presume that, though in the instance under consideration, *all* the testimonies in favor of the propositions laid down, are perhaps not noticed, yet at least, the most forcible and clear have been brought forward—that some of the most important have been introduced. Two leading topics will here claim our attention ; the organization of the Church and its ministry. Let us proceed then, in the first place, to contemplate the form of government and ecclesiastical constitution, of that Society, which is believed to be “the purest sample of the primitive Church, that is now in the world.” “This ancient Church, (we are informed,) from the beginning to the present time, was [has been?] of the Congregational order”—“like all the primitive Churches of New-England.” But if the “not unfrequent question” be repeated, what is “the Congregational order,” “what is the constitution of a Congregational Church,” we are yet without any other than a very vague and confused reply. If it is to be found in the features of similitude which marked “the primitive Churches of New-England,” it is a meagre skeleton indeed ; from which the existing state of things shows, that the life and soul have long since departed. The particulars in which “this *ancient* Church,” at the present day, bears any resemblance to those which were common to the primitive Churches, are trifling enough, as we shall have occasion to show. If the inquirer, anxious to conform to the purest sample of the primitive Church, repeat the “not unfrequent inquiry, what is the constitution of a Congregational Church?” still must he remain at a loss to say or understand, what it is. True, we are told “it is the Bible—to the law and to the testimony, is the ultimate resort—in every case of discipline, we resort to the Bible for decision—in all cases, the ultimate decision is, *what* saith the Book.” But is it necessary to remark, how extremely equivocal any such pretension must prove, when we see the number of sects, all possessing the same implicit adherence to *the Bible*, and yet widely differing in their views of it? The answer is certainly very unsatisfactory, do not all Christian denominations make the same professions? Amongst all the varying and conflicting sects of the day, is not the same avouched? and yet how essentially do they differ. Even among those very Societies for which such a peculiar deference for the Bible is so exclusively asserted, oppositions of opinion obtain as wide as creation. Nay, the same Society, professing to be guided exclusively by “the law and the testimony,” is at one time regulated by principles which at another time,

it rejects. And is not the word of God precisely the same, in all ages and in all places?

The conduct and opinions of some, who think that they are acting according to Scripture, are condemned by their own brethren, as indefensible and erroneous. While one Congregational Society are the advocates of high toned Calvinism, another, of the same denomination, will be found the abettors of the Pelagian or the Socinian heresy. In regard to those matters which, according to Congregational views, affect the very existence of the Church, the most contradictory opinions and practices obtain. The ministry and the ordinances, circumstances of essential importance in the constitution of the Church, are the subjects of such opposite decisions, that it were absurd to claim for both, or all, the warrant of Scripture.* The

* To give the reader some idea of the conflicting views which they are compelled to adopt, who undertake the impracticable task of reconciling their opposition to Episcopacy, with the facts of Scripture, a few instances are here referred to.

“It was the opinion of the principal divines, who first settled New England and Connecticut, that in every Church completely organized, there was a Pastor, Teacher, ruling Elders, and Deacons.” These distinct offices, they imagined, were clearly taught in the passages, Rom. xii. 7. 1 Cor. xii. 28. 1 Tim. v. 17. Eph. iv. 11. (See Trumbull, vol. 1, page 295, and Hooker there quoted.) On the other hand, the practice of the purest sample of the primitive Church, pronounces such an opinion unscriptural.

Some Churches regarded ruling Elders as scriptural officers of a Christian Church, and essential to a conformity to the primitive pattern. Others again reject them, and Dr. Dwight pronounces the *defection*, with respect to these officers, from the practice of the first settlers of New-England, an error in ecclesiastical government. (Dwight’s Theology, Sermon clxii.)

Some Churches had Pastors and Teachers, as distinct officers; others do not allow them. The early Ministers of this Society maintained, that all the Pastor’s office and power was confined to his own Church and Congregation, and that the administering of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, in other Churches, was irregular. Hence, an ordained Minister, called from one Church to become the Pastor of another, was required to be again ordained. In modern times, “a Minister is supposed, by his ordination, to be constituted a Minister, not of a particular Church, but of the Church of Christ at large.”

Some Churches, professing to be guided exclusively, by “what saith the Book,” reject the apostolic rite of ordaining Deacons to their office. In opposition to these, it is maintained, that the manner in which *the Seven Deacons* were set apart, is an authoritative example of the manner in which the Deacons are to be introduced into the Church. That is, that conformity to scripture practice requires, that all persons chosen to the office of Deacons, should be ordained to the duties of that office, by the imposition of the hands of the Presbytery. “This mode of consecration, has been disused in New-England, to a considerable extent,” says Dr. Dwight, without any valuable reason, but through mere indefensible inattention.

very question of discipline and Church membership itself, of the qualification essential to the constitution of a Church, has agitated the Churches with dissension, and shaken the whole Congregational system to its centre, threatening its speedy dissolution.

Under such circumstances, and amidst such conflicting views of what the Scriptures direct, how is it possible for "the solicitous inquirers" after *Gospel truth*, to understand "what is the constitution of a Congregational Church"? No wonder the question is not "unfrequent." Then too, to increase the perplexity upon the very back of the declaration, "it is the Bible," we are told, of "forms of faith and covenantings in each Church," as being expedient for more perfect mutual understanding and fellowship—of forms of agreement in the consociated Churches, and among the associated Ministers, for the purpose of harmonious intercourse; and then, too, we are informed of a constitution for regulating the Churches in Connecticut, "formed by a Synod," of a "system, used to this day, in the decision of ecclesiastical differences, and in sustaining harmonious intercourse and fellowship, between the Churches, and among the ministry; and in all controversial questions;" that "*monumen-*

In "the present sample of the primitive Church," all the Deacons which have been chosen under its present Pastor, "have been consecrated with *Prayer and the laying on of the hands of the Ministry*." Was this ministry a Presbytery?

"Amidst the ancient customs of this" same purest Church, and in other Churches, it was "customary for Ministers to call on the Parents and young people, to acknowledge publicly, what was termed the *renewal of the Baptismal covenant*." "Many other Churches and Pastors were persuaded that the owning of the Covenant was entirely anti-scriptural." Besides, "religious excitements" were deemed better, even if it were according to scripture, it bore too close a resemblance to "the illusions" of prelatical "imposition" of hands—the rite of confirmation; and "the practice has gone almost entirely into disuse." "The Puritan Fathers," too, if their *belief* is of the authority apparently allowed to it, believed it to be contrary to the integrity of the Christian Church, and conscientiously refused to administer Baptism, as it is now administered, at least, in one Church, not much more corrupt than "the purest sample." The Saybrook platform itself "whose sentiments are inseparable from the plain teachings of the Holy Scriptures"—the infallible system—directs that the *infants of one or both believing Parents only*, are to be baptised. Others break through "the mighty bond," and administer the rite to any infants whatever, and under any circumstances. Query, by what "missile," has the "monumental pillar" been "blotted" with such a rent? One thinks proper, to administer baptism to the children of such as make a profession of religion, without their being partakers of the Lord's Supper; another denounces the whole practice as *unscriptural—hypocritical and introducing disorder into the Christian Church*. By some, all persons, including infants, lawfully baptized, are believed to be members of the Christian Church; by others, they are allowed "neither part nor lot in this matter."

tal pillars of the wisdom of the Father, that" *mighty bond* of union and order, whose astonishing potency is such, that the "shock" of roarings and brayings, (O! mighty pillar!) have never been able to overthrow it—the Saybrook Platform!

These forms of agreement, this mighty bond, we shall find, moreover, have had more authority allowed them, in many cases, than even the Law and the Testimony; but of this, more hereafter. In the mean time, the dullness of comprehension is profoundly regretted, which understands not, whether to look for "the constitution of the Congregational Church," to the Bible, or to this "mighty bond," with its associated forms of faith and agreement. But difficult as it is to learn what the Congregational order is, we are at least enlightened upon the subject of the constitution of the First Ecclesiastical Society of Saybrook." "Our Fathers believed, (says the half-century Sermon,) that a number of Christians, entering into covenant to worship God according to the laws of Christ's kingdom, and obligating themselves to walk in Christian fellowship with each other, fully constituted a church of Christ. They believed, that such a Church was invested with power to choose their own Ministers, and exercise discipline, according to the rules of the Gospel." Again, "in the government of a Church, our fathers supposed the power to be placed entirely in the members."

Here, so far as the *belief* of "*our fathers*," is authority, we are furnished with a view of the constitution of the Congregational Society of Saybrook, which is believed "*to be the purest sample of the primitive Church, that is now in the world!*" It consists of a number of Christians entering into covenant, to worship God according to the laws of Christ's kingdom, and obligating themselves to walk in Christian fellowship with each other, invested with the power to choose their own Ministers, and exercise discipline according to the rules of the Gospel—the entire power being placed in the members. That the Bible, "the Law and the Testimony," furnishes one solitary example of a Church thus constituted, it is not so much as pretended. Beyond the matter of government and discipline, to sustain the alleged fundamental principle in its constitution, no single proof is attempted. Whatever conditions God himself may have prescribed as the terms of a covenant in relation to himself—whatever provisions he may have instituted, as the mediums through which to convey the blessings of his favor and grace—however contradictory may be their views of *what are* "the laws of Christ's kingdom," a number of Christians entering into covenant to worship God according to

the laws of Christ's kingdom, &c. "fully constitutes a church of Christ." This position, involving the most important consequences, is advanced upon no other authority whatever, than the mere *belief* of the Puritan Fathers, and the author of the half-century Sermon. "I fully believe, (says he,) that Jesus Christ established a Congregational Church," i. e. "such a Church as our Fathers have here formed." But when or where is it recorded, that he established such a Church? Surely, when an individual gravely asserts, that "no testimony of the Fathers, (of men who lived within a century of our Lord, and in Apostolic times,) can give divine authority to any institution whatever," it will not be expected, that his "*I believe*," however dogmatically expressed, will give divine authority to the Congregational Church. "*I believe* it, (says he,) to be *the purest sample* of the primitive Church, that is now in the world;" but upon what evidence? Surely, his *belief* can be of no weight and of no authority against the Bible.

But, so far as it is affected by the question of government and discipline, an attempt is made to sustain the Congregational order, by an appeal to Scripture. Several arguments are advanced, but the confused manner in which they are introduced, renders their precise application a matter of some conjecture. Let us, however, endeavor to follow the author of the Retrospect, through his "strong reasons," and see if they do not entirely fail him, and if his *belief*, and that of "*our* Fathers," be not the only foundation of his cause: a cause depending upon the "subsequent opinions," itself among the "subsequent establishments," which are of no weight and of no authority against the Bible.

The argument drawn from the fact, that "Jesus ordained the twelve, but admitted no superiority among them," is intended, it is presumed, with that which follows, relating to St. Paul's supposed ordination at Antioch, to support the position advanced, of the equal authority of the ministry. They are, therefore, passed over, until we come to the consideration of that subject. We are presented then, with the extraordinary declaration, that "after Paul was thus ordained, we find him claiming no power over the Churches, like the hierarchal or pontifical orders." Here the qualification of the power denied, by the phrase, "like the hierarchal or pontifical orders," is of little avail. It may serve to cover the weakness of the assertion, by the odium it would seek to cast upon any exercise of ministerial power; but as the declaration is advanced, in proof of the opinion, that the whole power of discipline was placed in the Church,

the assertion amounts to this: "after Paul was thus ordained, we find him claiming no power over the Churches." Now, from this confident assertion, let us turn "to the testimony;" and will it not be a matter of astonishment, to find this very Apostle, in direct opposition to such an assertion, not only in the full exercise of such power, but also giving repeated directions respecting the same exercise of power by others. Hear him, after giving directions for the due celebration of the Lord's supper, adding, in a tone of authority "the rest *will I set in order*, when I come;"* also, after enforcing certain commands, for the observance of the Corinthians, in a tone of equal authority, remarking, "*so ordain I in all Churches.*"† Attend to his *commands*, repeatedly laid upon the Thessalonians, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to observe his directions;‡ to his no less positive command, Sylvanus and Timotheus, in each case, being associated with him, "if any man *obey not our word* by this Epistle, note that man,"§ &c.; to his affectionate, but not therefore, the less authoritative entreaty, "We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and *are over you* in the Lord, and admonish you."|| Attend also, to his injunctions to the Hebrew Christians, "Remember,"—"Obey them that have *the rule over you*, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls."¶ And is it possible, that any man, with these passages before him, can affirm that St. Paul claimed no power over the Churches? and what does St. Paul mean, by the "obedience,"** of the Corinthians? by his coming unto them "with a rod?"†† by his "using *sharpness*, according to the power which the Lord hath given [him] to edification"?‡‡ by his being "found unto [them] such as [they] would not"?§§ by his writing to tell them that he would "not spare" "them which have sinned"?||| by his readiness to revenge all disobedience?¶¶—In fine, what are we to understand by his "*boasting of the authority which the Lord had given*" to him and Timothy, for edification?*** his "daily care of all the Churches"?††† Have the words here employed, a meaning? and can any meaning be possibly attached to them, which may justify the assertion, that Paul claimed no power over the Churches?—that the whole power, in the government and discipline of a Church, was placed entirely in the members? The direct reverse appears, as clear as the light of heaven. The ignorance, or

* 1 Cor. xi. 34

† 1 Cor. vii. 17.

‡ 2 Thess. iii. 4, 6, 10, 12.

§ 2 Thess. iii. 14.

|| 1 Thess. v. 12.

¶ Heb. xiii. 7, 17.

** 2 Cor. x. 6.

†† 1 Cor. iv. 21.

‡‡ 2 Cor. xiii. 10.

§§ 2 Cor. xii. 20.

||| 2 Cor. xiii. 2.

¶¶ 2 Cor. x. 6.

*** 2 Cor. x. 8.

††† 2 Cor. xi. 28.

utter disregard of the testimony of Scripture, which the assertion betrays, will serve to show what degree of confidence is to be placed in other like positive declarations. But further, the very passages specified, to prove that St. Paul “places the whole power in the Church,” establish the direct contrary. “I verily, (says he,) as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, him that hath so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus, (you and my spirit being assembled together,) with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan,”* &c. This passage is referred to, as furnishing an example of the primitive Church. Here we are told, that St. Paul “writes to the brethren of the Church at Corinth, (which then was probably without a pastor,) to exercise the Church’s power of discipline upon the open offender among them, and excind him from their fellowship.” “Afterwards, when he found this offender become a penitent, he writes to them, that they ought to forgive and comfort him.” The whole force of the argument in favor of Congregationalism, rests upon the *assumption*, that at the time when the Apostle wrote, “the Church at Corinth was *probably* without a Pastor.” Whatever, upon the admission of such a *probability*, may be the inference, the contrary is fatal to the Congregational cause. Even supposing, for a moment, that the Church was without a Pastor, the language of the Apostle, as will presently appear, is more than the advice of a Christian, and especially of a Congregational Minister, to a destitute Society—and should the case prove to be *probably* contrary to such unfounded supposition, in what possible way can the Apostle’s dictation be reconciled with Congregational principles? But the supposition is extremely improbable; and being necessary to the point, which it is introduced to establish, it requires satisfactory proof. The probability, nay, the evident fact, is in direct opposition to the declaration. In the first place, there were more than a single Church or congregation in Corinth; for St. Paul himself, though he addresses his Epistle to “the Church of God which is at Corinth,”† speaks also, of “*the Churches*” there;‡ and it is exceedingly improbable, that in so important a city as that of Corinth, several congregations should at the same time be destitute of their pastors. In the next place, a portion of this very Epistle,§ is occupied with censures upon the irregularities of the Corinthians, in the celebration of the Lord’s supper, and directions for its proper reception. Do Congre-

* 1 Cor. v. 3—5.

† 1 Cor. i. 2

‡ 1 Cor. xiv. 34.

§ 1 Cor. xi. 20—34.

gationalists then, it is asked, sanction the administration of that sacrament by the hands of an unauthorized person—or was the Church at Corinth, indeed provided with a Pastor? The latter conclusion must, of course, be the true one; and thus is established the authority of the Apostle, not only over “the members,” but also over such as exercised the ministerial office in the Church. For, unless possessed of such authority, what right had the Apostle to interfere—what occasion or propriety could there be, in his writing to the ministers and people of the Corinthian Church, in the manner in which he does? Hence, is seen the importance of getting rid of these ministers, to substantiate the position asserted. From what has been noticed, too, appears the necessity, in the absence of any evidence, and in the face of facts, of declaring it probable that the Church was without a pastor. The language of the Apostle, moreover, admits of no misconception whatever. “I, (says he,) *have judged* (κρίνω), already”—I have decided—passed sentence of condemnation. The punishment pronounced, the Apostle declares to be that which he himself has adjudged; as that too, which he would inflict were he present, which he does decree, being absent. To show that the Apostle possessed the unquestionable authority to exercise the power here ascribed to him, we have an instance of the actual exercise of that power in inflicting the very punishment here adjudged upon—“Hymeneus and Alexander—whom,” says St. Paul, “I have delivered unto Satan.”*

In his second Epistle to the Corinthian Church, the Apostle *beseeches* those to whom he writes “to forgive and comfort” the offender; for these were moral acts which, with all his Apostolic authority, he could not compel any man to perform—still that authority is manifestly asserted, in immediate connexion with this exhortation, when, in reference to the very case under consideration, he affirms expressly, “to this end also, did I write, that I might know the *proof* of you, whether ye be *obedient* in all things.”† What means obedience, when there is no authority to command it? Certainly, as St. Paul exacted, and would test the obedience of the Corinthians, so certainly had he the right to require it.

Another, and the last passage, which is introduced to prove that, “in the government of a Church, the power is placed entirely in the members,” is that in which our Lord directs an offended brother, in case the previous steps prescribed should fail, to tell the offender’s

* 1 Tim. i. 20.

† 2 Cor. 2, 7—9.

fault to the Church.* Here we are told, that Christ “directs his disciples to carry their cases of discipline before the Church, as the tribunal of ultimate decision,” where the “offender was irreclaimable by the preceding process.” “The power of the Church is shown,” it is said, by the subsequent words, “verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven.”† Here, it is alleged, “the full and ultimate power is given to the Church, or body of believers.” It would have proved fatal to the Congregational argument, to proceed with the quotation, and the ensuing words are therefore omitted: “Again, I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them, of my Father which is in Heaven; for where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”‡ The phraseology here employed, with the connexion in which these verses stand, shows that the words of our Saviour were evidently designed to assure to the constituted authorities of his Church, the divine sanction of their decisions. This sanction is pledged to the acts of two or three, convened in the name of Christ, i. e. in the exercise of authority derived from him. But “the full and ultimate power is given, (it is said,) to the body of believers.” And do the advocates of this opinion, indeed allow such a weight of authority to the decisions of any two or three of their number? If so, then the power is not given to the body of believers; and if not so, then are they not the Church to which Christ here refers. If we attend to the language of our Lord, and are willing to believe it to be consistent with all other parts of the inspired word, the whole passage, like the other adduced, proves the direct contrary of that which they are advanced to support. He most assuredly would be complying with the letter and the spirit of the Saviour’s precept, to bring the case in question before the Church, who should bring it before the constituted authority of the Church, whatever it might be. What that authority is, Scripture must determine. To assume, that the passage under consideration, establishes the Congregational discipline and government, is begging the question at issue, i. e. it is taking for granted the very thing, which the passage is introduced to support. If other passages of Scripture give evidence of an authority, existing in an order of officers appointed for the government of the Church, by such passages is this to be interpreted. Such have already been referred to, and more shall be no-

* Mat. xviii. 17.

† Mat. xviii. 18.

‡ Mat. xviii. 19—20.

ticed hereafter. But without appealing to these, the very language before us, shows us that no such exercise of Church discipline, as is contended for, was contemplated—that the full and ultimate power is not given to the body of believers. Our Lord addressed his twelve disciples, as the constituted officers of his Church—one of their number, St. Peter, having already been invested with the authority intended, when our Divine Redeemer declared, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.”* In this instance, we see that power bestowed upon a single individual, which it is said was “given not to a Prelate, but to the body of believers.” It was not limited to St. Peter, but in the case under consideration, the same authority is vested in the twelve, while there is no evidence whatever, that it extended “to the body of believers.” That this authority belonged exclusively to those officers whom Christ appointed over his Church, is placed beyond all possible doubt, by the record of St. John, according to whom, our Saviour expressly says, “whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.”† A particle of evidence is here challenged, to show that any such power was in any case bestowed upon the members of a Church.

The passages of Scripture referred to, to refute the several positions which have been the subject of consideration, might have been greatly multiplied. The difficulty has been, among the large number at hand, to make a selection. They have been introduced therefore, as they occurred, many of equal weight and importance being omitted. There are beside, several others of a most conclusive nature, which will be introduced in connexion with the subject of the ministry, when that comes under consideration. And now an appeal is made to the reader’s candid judgment, to decide, what is the conclusion to which we are necessarily led, respecting the import of the Scriptures which have already been considered? What is the necessary inference? Is it not perfectly manifest, that they go to show that the power of government and discipline is not placed in the members of a Church: that so far as conformity to the Scripture example of government and discipline, is essential to the integrity of a Church, and, so far as the arguments which have been examined, decide the question, the Congregational Church, at Saybrook, is

* Mat. xvi. 19.

† John, xx. 23.

very far from being “the purest sample of the primitive Church that is now in the world”? that it has no sort of claim to the distinction, of being the Church which Christ established? We have seen, that the arguments advanced, in proof of the position, that the Congregational form of Church government and discipline, are most conformable to primitive example, so far from establishing that point, go directly to disprove it. We have seen, that St. Paul did claim and exercise authority over the Churches; that St. Peter and the rest of the Apostles were invested by our Lord himself, with the most ample powers, under the solemn sanction, *whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven*. The inference justly and necessarily deducible from these facts is, that so far as they determine the matter, the Congregational Church is very wide of the high pretensions asserted for it. Nay, it is lamentably deficient in these respects, of any claim whatever to the character of the Church of Christ.

In coming to this conclusion, the writer is not aware of any uncharitable influence. He believes it to be the necessary, inevitable inference, from the word of God. All that he asks of the reader is, to examine, with prayer and an humble frame of mind—to examine and judge for himself. “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.”

CONGREGATIONAL MINISTRY.



Having considered and perceived the utter insufficiency of the arguments advanced, in support of the Congregational Church, so far as its government and discipline are concerned, we come now to the investigation of a subject of vital importance, a subject involving the most serious consequences, affecting the integrity of the Christian ordinances, and for aught that can be shown to the contrary, one which concerns the dearest interests of man. I mean the Christian ministry; that ministry with whom the presence of the Saviour is promised, “even unto the end of the world”^{*}—that ministry of which our Lord hath said, “he that receiveth you, receiveth me,”[†] and “he that despiseth you despiseth me”[‡]—that ministry in fellowship with which the primitive Church “continued steadfastly,”[§] and thus furnished to the world one unequivocal characteristic of the Church of Christ—“the ministry of reconciliation.”^{||} Whatever views may be entertained of the importance of adhering to the primitive pattern of government and discipline, here is a matter about which it would scarcely seem possible that two opinions could obtain. Christ has appointed an order of men to act in his name as “ambassadors for”[¶] him, “and stewards of the mysteries of God”^{**}—them he has ordained to “preach the Gospel” of salvation to a lost world^{††}—them he has commissioned by the sacred rite of baptism,^{‡‡} to admit into his Church such as would be saved^{§§}—them he has authorized, in a way of his own institution, to commemorate his dying love and administer the emblems of the great sacrifice, to such as hope for salvation through his blood.^{|||} And O how deeply are they interested, to be well persuaded in their own minds—they to whom the Gospel of Salvation is proposed—they who would assure themselves of their being admitted into the number of “such as shall be saved”—they who would not substitute a solemn mockery of the Redeemer’s dying ordinance for the hallowed rite itself, how deeply are they

^{*} Mat. xxviii. 20. [†] Mat. x. 40. [‡] Luke x. 16. [§] Acts ii. 42.

^{||} 2 Cor. v. 18. [¶] 2 Cor. v. 20. ^{**} 1 Cor. iv. 1. ^{††} Mark xvi. 15.

^{‡‡} Mat. xxviii. 19. ^{§§} Acts ii. 41, 47. ^{|||} Luke xxii. 19.

concerned to *know* that he who comes to them in the name, is in reality, the commissioned and authorized “ambassador for Christ.” I say it is a subject of vital importance. For manifestly they, whoever they may be, who “come in the name” of Jesus Christ and without his authority, presume to exercise the office of a Minister in his Church: they who are not in the way of Christ’s own ordinance invested with power so to do, and contrary to his appointment intrude into an office of his institution, must be guilty of a grievous usurpation; and all who knowingly unite with such, are participators in the fearful crime! Each time that they listen to the preaching of such self-constituted ministers, are they abetting a grievous usurpation; each time they receive from such the emblems of the Redeemer’s crucified body and shed blood, are they countenancing a most outrageous mockery of the Saviour’s dying memorial. “He that biddeth [them] God speed, is a partaker of [their] evil deeds.”* Startling as this position may seem, it will be found much more difficult to decry than to disprove it. The subject of the Christian ministry then, is one of vital importance, and as we value our soul’s salvation, and as we would “do the will” of God, are we solemnly called upon to weigh well the pretensions of whatever persons come to us in the name of Christ. Before proceeding to examine the testimonies referred to, as decisive of the primitive organization of the Christian ministry, it is proper briefly to attend to a very convenient method which is adopted, in order to get rid of a weight of evidence which, though not essential, has a very strong bearing upon the subject. A most extraordinary and amazing assertion, and a no less extraordinary illustration are resorted to, with a view of consigning all the testimonies of all the early Fathers, without any regard to advantages or integrity to the mass of things unworthy of credit. The extraordinary assertion which is employed to answer so useful a purpose, is this: “No testimony of the Fathers can give divine authority to any institution whatever.” The position be it remembered, is assumed with a view of excluding a certain description of evidence, respecting the primitive organization of the Christian Church and ministry. Let the assumption be admitted, and what are the consequences. The sacred rite of baptism is administered to infants, under the solemnities of a divine institution, chiefly upon the ‘testimony’ which “the Fathers” give to the primitive practice. The observation of the first day of the week, as the divinely appoint-

* 2 John 11.

ed Sabbath, rests essentially upon the same testimony. Nay, the blessed record of God's revealed will, with all its animating hopes and cheering consolations, animating and cheering only, as they are the authentic declarations of the Eternal, is handed down to us as of "divine authority," upon the "testimony of the Fathers." Yet are we boldly assured, that "no testimony of the Fathers can give divine authority to any institution whatever;" and thus an individual who professes to be a *Minister of Jesus Christ*, is found virtually *denying the divine institution of infant baptism, of the Christian Sabbath*, and even the *divine inspiration of the Bible itself*.*

* The strange language so positively expressed, is borrowed from Dr. Dwight, and to show how much confidence he entertained in his assertion, and how very limited was his own application of it, it is worthy of remark, that even he could quote the "testimony of the Fathers," in one instance at least, as of "*a witness of high authority*," and together as sufficient fully to establish the divine appointment of an institution of much questioned propriety. Admitting "that there is no instance in which it is declared in so many terms that infants were baptized," he maintains that the practice and "testimony of the Fathers" are sufficient to show, that it was not introduced in any age, subsequent to that of the Apostles: and to prove that infant baptism was uniformly practiced by the early Christians, he appeals to a *few* of those very Fathers, whose testimony upon the subject of Episcopacy, is set aside as unworthy of consideration. After enumerating their various *intimations*, (not direct proofs,) in support of the opinion which he adopts, he adds, "had the baptism of infants been introduced in any age, subsequent to that of the Apostles, *these things could not have been, nor could the history of them have been found*." And why is not the same reasoning, and the more express "testimony of the Fathers," equally applicable to the subject of the ministry; and why do they not prove equally conclusive in this as in the former case? The same writer, acknowledging that "the duty of mankind to celebrate the Christian Sabbath," is not "expressly commanded or expressly declared in Scripture," to prove its "divine institution," appeals to the "testimony of the Fathers." Their very limited but satisfactory evidence, he closes with the observation, that they who in addition to the first day celebrated the Jewish Sabbath in the fifth century, "plainly adopted it as they did a great *multitude of other corruptions*, merely from *their own construction of the Scriptures*." Thus declaring that neglect to admit the practice and "testimony of the Fathers" in interpreting the Scriptures, led to "a great multitude of corruptions." See *Dwight's Theology*, Serm. cviii. cvii. cvi.

Why the same construction of the Scriptures, excluding the practice and "testimony of the Fathers," may not lead to "other corruptions" respecting the Church and ministry, it would be difficult to explain. With what consistency, moreover, it is asked, can an individual receive the canon of Scripture, the books of the New Testament handed down to us by the Fathers, such as they tell us were the productions of inspired men, rejecting all others, and yet refuse to receive that institution of the ministry which that very same testimony declares to be divine? Such evidence is perfectly satisfactory upon any other important point; but when applied to Episcopacy, then "no testimony of the Fathers can give divine authority to any institution whatever."

Why, the assertion is the very weapon of the infidel, it is the strong hold within which he entrenches himself against the evidences of the Christian faith. Tell him of the recorded testimony of men of unimpeachable integrity—of the blood of Martyrs freely shed in attestation of the truth—of persecutions encountered and sufferings endured, and death in its most appalling forms fearlessly met, and he will repel the force of all by the same position. True he will say, they may have been sincere, they may have believed what they said: but “no testimony of the Fathers can give divine authority to any institution whatever.” Knowing the differences which separate us, the writer was led, of course, to regard his brethren of other denominations as holding errors of greater or less moment; but never was he prepared to see a body of men calling themselves Christians, descend so low as to adopt an infidel’s argument, to rid themselves of the testimonies which bear against them—an argument which, if admitted, must prove subversive of the most sacred institutions, nay, divest of their high authority the “oracles of God” themselves. Yet here we have it uttered by the Pastor of a Society which is believed to be “the purest sample of the primitive Church that is now in the world”—of a Society which “has been a great advocate for a pious, learned, and evangelic ministry,” and endorsed by “a meeting of the First Ecclesiastical Society in Saybrook,” that “no testimony of the Fathers can give divine authority to any institution whatever.”*

* Although the “half century Sermon” is ushered into the world *nominally*, under the auspices “of the First Ecclesiastical Society in Saybrook,” yet is the writer of this reply by no means disposed, to hold all the members of that community responsible for the denunciations, the follies and the absurdities with which that production abounds. Happy is he to be assured that they are utterly disclaimed by those whose piety and good sense entitle their opinions to respect. The facts of the case appear to be these. After “prophetic denunciations had fulminated” for a sufficient time, portending a terrible chastisement upon “the Prelatical Church”—the fearful threatening was at length realized in the infliction of a Sermon or “Retrospect on the ministry and Church of Saybrook.” Several weeks subsequently to the “shock,” “at a meeting of the First Ecclesiastical Society in Saybrook,” it was proposed that “a copy of the half century Sermon” should be requested “for publication.” At the same time, in order to secure a vote to that effect, the Society were assured, that this *would involve them in no expense*, that their assent alone was asked; several individuals having determined to publish the discourse upon their own account. Ignorance of their full import, in some instances, and in others an understanding that the objectionable parts were to be omitted, led to the adoption of the proposed resolution. When, however, “the Society’s Committee” applied to the author for a copy of the “Retrospect,” lo! it was already in the hands of the Printer, and beyond the reach of expurgation. But no sooner

But no less extraordinary than the assertion itself, is the manner in which it is illustrated. "A single instance to this point," is that "to Ignatius, an early Father in the Church at Antioch," "fifteen Epistles are ascribed," of which "eight are spurious," "and the other seven dubious in many points." "His testimony," we are told, does "not favor the idea of a Diocesan Bishop;" and we are led to understand, that it does favor Congregationalism. Besides, we are informed "he *never speaks of confirmation.*" "Clement of Rome," "and Polycarp of Smyrna," "never speak of three orders." Ergo. "No testimony of the Fathers can give divine authority to any institution whatever." Q. E. D. Now if any person can perceive the most remote connexion between the alleged circumstances and the infidel proposition which they are introduced to corroborate, he must possess a degree of sagacity beyond what ordinarily falls to the share of mere mortals. Some of the Epistles ascribed to Ignatius are spurious—others dubious—he never speaks of confirmation, and his testimony favors Congregationalism. Clement and Polycarp, never mention three orders—therefore, "no testimony of the Fathers can give divine authority to any institution whatever." The argument is worthy the position.*

To stay to correct the confident statements which make up the "instance to the point," is not now needful, they will form the subject of future consideration. In order to counteract however, the false impression which they might produce, it is sufficient to declare, that in the only important points, they are as erroneous as they are confident. The truth is, that the writings of the early Fathers, furnish such a weight of evidence in favor of Episcopacy, that its op-

was it published and its readers made better acquainted with its contents, than its language and spirit were condemned, and its sentiments disavowed by those who had assented to its publication in their name. These indications of a premeditated and determined assault, formed a chief inducement to the publication of this reply. When however, the writer adopts a phraseology implicating more than a single person, he desires to be understood as referring not to the individuals of the "First Society" generally, but to *those who knew what they voluntarily published to the world*, less to the detriment of the cause they aimed to injure, than to the *Christian regrets* of their brethren, the *wounding of peace and charity* and the *discredit of their own profession*.

* A reference to Dwight's Theology, Sermon cli. will show that this miserable attempt to discredit the "testimony of the Fathers," is a wretched confounding of several arguments upon distinct points. Without perceiving its force and application, an "instance" is adopted from one point to illustrate another, so far different, as to render the want of connexion and the absurdity sufficiently striking.

ponents dare not venture upon that testimony, and are therefore solicitous to reject it, as it would now seem at no matter what hazard. Only put down Episcopacy, no fear for the consequences. The word of God and the institutions of the Gospel may all go with it.

With reference to the government and discipline of the Church, the remark has been made, and now again with respect to the ministry it is repeated, that if in these particulars the Society by which we are denounced, can sustain its claim to coincidence with the Church which Christ established, its pretensions to being "the purest sample of the primitive Church that is now in the world," their desire to brand the establishment of the Episcopal Church—the Episcopal government and discipline and ministry as "opposition to the finger of God," "hostility" to "the work of divine Grace," and "an effort" of the *invidious Adversary*, admits of some extenuation. But should an appeal "to the Law and the Testimony," show that in its ministry as well as in its government and discipline, "the Congregational Church" is entirely deficient of the marks of a scriptural organization—that the Episcopal Church retains the characteristics of the Church "built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets," how bold must their presumption be, how awful their responsibility, who can thus denounce and stigmatize "the Church of God which he hath redeemed with his own blood,"* and are thus "found to be fighting even against God."† In regard to the organization of the ministry, "they" [our Fathers,] says the author of the "Retrospect," "acknowledged no superior order;" "but considered Bishops, Elders, and Presbyters, as of the same standing and of equal authority." "In this, they *supposed* they had for their direction the example of Christ, and the Apostolic Churches." "They also believed that there were but two offices in the Church, Bishops and Deacons," to support which belief it is said, that "Paul *writes* (?) to the Elders of Ephesus, to meet him at Miletus, and addresses them as Bishops." Here then in the very face of the "*acknowledgment*," that there was "no superior order in the ministry"—is the *belief* asserted that there were "two grades of distinction."‡ To avoid the difficulty, it is true, the distinction which is denied to the ministry, is allowed "to the officers of the Church"—but that Deacons were *Ministers* in the Church as their name imports, will subsequently be

* Acts xx. 28.

† Acts v. 39.

‡ This statement of the belief of the Fathers, limiting the offices to two, is incorrect. See note, page 15.

made to appear. But here we have an argument in favor of the Congregational scheme of one *order*, and “but two offices” based upon the fact—that the *names* Bishop and Elder are used indiscriminately of the same persons. Now any attempt to found an argument upon the use of these terms, only betrays the author’s ignorance of the merits of the question which he has undertaken to discuss. That the word “Bishop,” is applied in Scripture to the second order of the ministry, has never been disputed, and is freely conceded, and the opponents of Episcopacy are sincerely welcome to all the advantage they can possibly derive from the fact. The use of names is a matter of very little moment ; things are the important subjects. The *term* Bishop signifies an *overseer*, and it is equally applicable in this general sense, to the overseer of a single congregation, and of a Diocese or several congregations. Its application to the former, does not disprove the existence of the more general overseer in the exercise of peculiar powers. If Scripture sustains the position that there were three distinct grades or orders of Ministers, one of which, exclusively exercised the powers peculiar to that office which now belongs to a Bishop, another of which discharged the more limited functions of a Presbyter, and to the third of which, were assigned the present duties of a Deacon—it cannot be denied that in such a case we should have all the precedent requisite to authorize the perpetuity of said distinctions—it would be idle to argue that there was “no superior order in the ministry,” that all were “of the same standing and of equal authority”—although the names now appropriated to two respective orders were at first applied to one and the same. Nor yet does the application to one order of a title generally appropriated to another, as of “Presbyter” to an Apostle, establish the equality of the two. Christ is styled an “Apostle and High Priest,”* a “Bishop,”† a “Deacon.”‡ Would any one thence infer that he possessed no power and authority in the Church above that of an Apostle, or Bishop, or Presbyter, or Deacons ? In order to establish the Congregational scheme, it is not enough to show that a Presbyter at Ephesus, was called a Bishop. It is necessary to disprove the ministerial character of St. Stephen and St. Philip, to show that though Deacons, yet being ordained with prayer and the impositions of hands,§ engaged in preaching the Gospel,|| and baptizing,¶ theirs was not to be ranked as a grade of the ministry. It

* Heb. iii. 1. † 1 Pet. ii. 25. ‡ διακονον. Rom. xv. 8. § Acts vi. 6.

|| Acts vi. 10, &c. viii. 5. 40.

¶ Acts viii. 38.

is likewise necessary to show that the office of an Apostle was in nothing beyond that of a Presbyter—that Timothy and Titus though commissioned to ordain and to exercise jurisdiction over Presbyters, were yet possessed merely of an “equal authority” with them. “For certainly,” remarks one of the most able opponents of Episcopacy, “it does not follow from the nature of the thing, that because Bishop and Presbyter mean the same office, therefore there is no other officer above them.”* The very fact contended for is, that three distinct orders in the ministry are found in Scripture, under the denominations of “Apostles,” “Bishops” or “Presbyters,” and “Deacons.” “For,” says Theodoret, an early historian, “those now called Bishops, were anciently called Apostles, but in process of time, the name Apostle was left to those who were truly Apostles, and the name of Bishops was restrained to those who were anciently called Apostles. Thus Epaphroditus was the Apostle of the Philippians, Titus of the Cretans, and Timothy of the Asiatics.” Although then the *names* “Bishops, Elders and Presbyters,” were originally applied to individuals “of the same standing and of equal authority,” this does not furnish the least support whatever, to the supposition that there was, “no superior order in the ministry.”

But when they acknowledged no such order, “they supposed they had for their direction the example of Christ.” He “ordained the twelve, but admitted no superiority among them:” but when “he found them aspiring for pre-eminence, and disputing who should be the greatest in his kingdom,” “he rebuked their ambition, and taught them humility.” And upon these circumstances, are grounded the belief that there was “no superior order in the ministry.” Here it is certainly a matter of conjecture, which furnishes the most powerful support to what *the Fathers* acknowledged; the fact asserted, or the illustration. Was it because our Lord checked their “aspirations for pre-eminence” and greatness, and “rebuked their ambition,” that we too are to acknowledge no superior in the ministry? If we may be allowed to judge from certain plain indications, we may find that the breast of a Presbyter or a Pastor, can harbor desires after pre-eminence and greatness, without the temptation of a mitre; that if the practice of humility be inconsistent with the exercise of Episcopal power and authority, it might also dispense with those of another description. But let us attend to the full force of

* Dr. Mason’s works, vol. iii. page 61.

the position. "Jesus ordained the twelve, but admitted no superiority among them;" therefore, "the purest sample of the primitive Church," acknowledges no superior order in the ministry. The full weight of this logical deduction, can be best estimated, by reference to a supposed case in our future history. The legislative authority of this Union, is vested in two bodies, one of them, in several particulars, possessing powers which do not belong to the other; for instance, that of confirming the appointment of political Ministers to other governments. Now, let us suppose at some future period, the government and institutions of our country should become a matter of mere history, which God forbid: or, in the case of their perpetuity and immutability, the parallel would be more strict. Let us suppose, too, that some future people, pretending to frame a government similar to our own, and well persuaded of the advantages of simplicity, in its organization, should contend that our constitution recognized but one body of men, in the discharge of legislative functions—that to all who were engaged in the affairs of legislation, belonged equal powers. And let us suppose, that in support of this opinion, they should urge, that we had instituted a Senate, "but admitted no superiority among them;" that, although there did appear some indications of a disposition on their part, to exercise peculiar powers, yet, that an authentic document, expressly declared, "that all men are born free and equal:" consequently, there was no such distinction as two houses in the legislature, there was no such body recognized as a House of Representatives, the genius of the Constitution prohibited any such thing. The argument would be fully as conclusive, as that under consideration, and just about as wise. "Jesus ordained the twelve, but admitted no superiority among them," therefore, the Fathers of "the purest sample of the primitive Church," acknowledged no superior order in the ministry. In what possible manner does the fact justify the inference? Our Lord might have ordained the twelve, with equal authority, and ten thousand inferior orders would never have affected their equality with each other, as a superior order in the ministry; their existence does not disprove the divine appointment of another and another order—and in what manner their equality could at all interfere with the institution of the subordinate grades, it is difficult to conjecture.

Another instance adduced, in support of the divine authority of Congregationalism, is the alleged ordination of St. Paul at Antioch.

—“Now there were in the Church that was at Antioch, certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas and Simeon—and Lucius of Cyrene and Manaen—and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”* Here it is said, that “Paul, though called of Heaven to be an Apostle to the Gentiles, is seen intermingling with the Prophets and teachers at Antioch, and was ordained by them with prayer and the laying on of hands.” And it is added, “here is simply the equal authority of the teachers in that Church, a Presbytery of Elders.” Now, the passage is confidently appealed to, in support of the assertion, that it *authorizes no such statement*. There is not a particle of proof to be found in it, that St. Paul was *ordained by a Presbytery of Elders*. On the contrary, the briefly detailed events of the Apostle’s life, show the declaration to be decidedly incorrect. The particular passage under consideration, furnishes no evidence of an ordination at all; if there were an ordination, there is no proof that it was performed by the individuals there named; or if it was an ordination performed by the individuals named, the notion of their being “a Presbytery of Elders” is mere assumption. If there were an ordination to a ministerial office, it is asked, what office might it be? Paul had already been engaged *seventeen* years† in “preaching Christ”—made “a Minister and a witness” of the Gospel, at the time of his conversion, and commissioned then to go to the Gentiles; he “was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision,” but entered at once upon the discharge of his solemn duties;‡ “preaching the faith which he once destroyed.”§ Together with Barnabas, he had labored in the work of his calling, a year at Antioch.|| In the very passage under consideration, he is styled a Prophet or teacher, one who “ministered to the Lord.” To what then, was St. Paul ordained?—to a higher office in the ministry? This of course, our opponents cannot admit. The mere circumstance of the imposition of hands, accompanied with prayer, ascertains nothing. Among other instances, it was practiced in the rite of confirmation.¶ Thus we find “the doctrine of laying on of hands,” classed with repentance, faith, and baptism, among “the *principles* of the doctrine of

* Acts xiii. 1—3.

† Compare Gal. i. 18, ii. 1. with Acts ix. 26. xi. 30.

‡ Acts xxvi. 16—20. ix. 20, 22, 27, 29.

§ Gal. i. 23.

|| Acts xi. 25, 26.

¶ Acts viii. 17. xix. 6.

Christ.”* It was frequently practiced likewise in restoring the diseased, as in the case of St. Paul himself, Annanias was sent to “put his hands on him, that he might receive his sight.”† And with what claim to consistency, can the Congregationalist allow to the mere circumstance that hands were imposed, sufficient weight to establish the fact of an ordination to the ministry, and reject the same conclusion under precisely the same circumstances, in regard to “the seven” at Jerusalem?‡ The plain truth is, that according to the direction of the Holy Ghost, Paul and Barnabas were separated for a particular work of a temporary nature; for we find them having accomplished it, and returning “to Antioch, from whence they had had been recommended to the grace of God, for the work which they fulfilled.”§ This then, would appear to be the full import of the passage—they “were recommended to the grace of God for the work” upon which they were about to enter. If this amounted to an ordination, then do we find St. Paul the subject of a re-ordination when in conjunction with Silas himself a Prophet,|| he was again “recommended by the brethren to the grace of God,”¶ in this same Antioch, when about to re-visit the cities where he had already “preached the word of the Lord.”**

The language of the Apostle himself, shows most conclusively, that neither “at Antioch,” nor elsewhere, was he “ordained by—a presbytery of Elders,” or by “any prelatical power,” or by Apostles, or even “by the brethren—the body of believers.” Asserting

* Heb. vi. 1, 2.

† Acts ix. 12.

‡ Acts vi. 5, 6.

§ Acts xiv. 26.

|| Acts xv. 32.

¶ Acts xv. 40.

** Acts xv. 36. The presumption is at least as fair as some that have been ventured in the form of confident assertions, that St. Paul, in this case, for the first time received a valid ordination; for here, for the first time, do we meet with an instance of one of the genuine Congregational stamp, only *supposing* what requires *comparatively* no great effort of the imagination, that here was an ordination. “Though called of Heaven to be an Apostle,” Paul’s commission from such a source, was *radically defective upon Congregational principles*. Though recommended to the grace of God, “with prayer, and the laying on of hands,” still was there an *essential defect upon Congregational principles*, for this was done by “a presbytery of elders.” In neither case had the church, “the members, the body of believers,” in whom the whole power is placed, given their sanction to his ministerial character, the essential warrant, the *vox populi*, was yet wanting; and it was *not until more than twenty years after* his entrance upon the duties of the ministry, that we have a vestige of evidence, that St. Paul became an authorized minister of Jesus Christ, upon Congregational principles!

his Apostolic character,* he expressly disclaims the agency of any human authority whatever, in conferring it. He declares that it was “not of men, neither by man;”† that *immediately* upon his being called to preach the Gospel, he “conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went he up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before him.”‡ “By the revelation of Jesus Christ” was he made “a minister and a witness of the things which he had seen,” and “immediately” was he “obedient unto the heavenly vision.”§

But granting, for the sake of argument, that an ordination was performed in the instance at Antioch, still it is not said by whom. The direction of the Holy Ghost amounted to this much, out of a certain number of prophets and teachers who in consequence of “the persecution,” had come to Antioch, two individuals were to be set apart to a certain “work.” If in the ordinary sense of the term, they were to be ordained to that work, reason and common sense would decide that they only who were competent to the duty could perform it, whether *they* were presbyters or a higher order in the ministry. They to whom the direction came, fulfilled the part assigned them: but who *they* were is not recorded. If those named were the individuals designated to administer the rite, then have we the singular instance of three Prophets and Teachers ordaining to their office, two persons who were already invested with it. Observe the force and conclusive nature of the argument. “Paul *called to be an apostle* of Jesus Christ,”|| by him made a “*witness and a minister*” of the gospel, and *straightway* entering upon the duties of his calling and after devoting seventeen years to the ministry, is at length ordained, not a Congregational, but a Presbyterian minister. Paul and Barnabas, two Prophets and Teachers i. e. two Presbyterian ministers, are ordained by three “Prophets and Teachers” i. e. by three Presbyterian ministers, to be what they were already, Presbyterian ministers: and this is produced as evidence, that “the members” of “the church”—“the body of believers,” “is invested with power,” to ordain “their own ministers.”

But it is needless to pursue these remarks any further. The absurdity is too glaring not to be detected at a glance.¶ The most

* Gal. i. 1, 17.

† Gal. i. 1.

‡ Gal. i. 17.

§ Gal. I. 12. Acts, xxvi. 16. Gal. i. 16. Acts, ix. 20, xxvi. 19. || I. Cor. i. 1.

¶ Dr. Dwight himself, supposing the transaction to have been an ordination to the ministry, admits it to have been an ordination by Apostles; possibly upon the strength of Gal. ii. 9.

that can be made of the passage is, that Paul and Barnabas, two Prophets and Teachers, were, at the suggestion of the Holy Ghost, separated to a particular work, and with a view thereto recommended to the grace of God—by whom the account does not say.

The last instance introduced, as an “example of the apostolic churches,” which induced “the pilgrim fathers,” to “acknowledge no superior order in the ministry, is the ordination of Timothy. “Though Timothy has the appellation of Bishop, yet he was ordained by the Presbytery and not by any superior order.” Now the *veracious* “half century sermon” to the contrary notwithstanding, it is denied that “Timothy has” in any part of “the Bible, the appellation of Bishop;” and just about as true as the declaration which affirms it, is the assertion that he was ordained “*not by any superior order.*” He was ordained “*by prophecy,*”* “by the putting on of [St. Pauls] hands,”† “*with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery.*” He was ordained “*with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery*” it is true; but in the anxiety to turn this passage to the account of Congregationalism, it is forgotten, that the very point to be proved is here assumed. To establish the position, that Timothy held no higher rank than that of a Presbyter, it is taken for granted that a body of Presbyters ordained him, which is the very circumstance requiring evidence.

Of whom was “the presbytery” composed? will it be said of mere Elders according to the present acceptance? we ask for the evidence. The term itself may signify any body of Elders, of whatever description, whether ministers or laymen,‡ and it is here to be interpreted by scripture practice. If indeed it can be made to appear that St. Paul’s was not “a superior order,” that the ordaining power was vested in ordinary presbyters, then it would be reasonable to in-

* 1 Tim. iv. 14.

† 2 Tim. i. 6.

‡ The identical expression occurs Luke xxii. 66, where it has reference to an “assembly of the people.” The phrase there rendered by our translators “the Elders of the people” is according to the original “the presbytery of the people”—το πρεσβυτεριον του λαου. The same expression is also applied to the “Chief Priests” by St. Paul himself in the original of the phrase “the estate of the elders,” Acts, xxii. 5. compared with ix. 14. xxvi. 12. Even the essential principles of Congregationalism require the possibility that “the Presbytery,” was composed of *laymen*. Else how could “the church” presume to “appoint a number of the brethren”—“to lay on hands in ordination”—as has been generally admitted, much to the confusion of our author’s argument, when he correctly infers, that Timothy could not derive from his ordainers an authority superior to their own.

fer that this prebytery was composed of such persons. That supposition however, must be first established. If on the other hand, it should be ascertained that the power was limited to a "superior order," certainly it will not be difficult to conclude that "the Presbytery" was composed of persons of *that order*. But if in connexion with this passage, we refer to the further language of St. Paul, we shall find that at least one apostle was in the number, and so peculiar was his power, that he could say "stir up the gift of God that is in thee *by* the putting on of *my* hands."* Here then we have direct evidence of the ordaining power being vested in an apostle, in that which is regarded as the highest of the three orders : that at least one such was in "the Presbytery."—Let the advocates of ministerial parity produce a single instance of a like power exercised by a mere Presbyter, or show one solitary reason for the supposition that one of that order was in the number of "the Presbytery," before they lay any claim to this passage as a testimony in their behalf.

We have thus examined all the testimonies introduced from scripture to sustain the congregational views of the christian ministry ; and what is the clear result ? Why that, *to say the least*, they furnish nothing whatever decisive upon the subject. The appointment of the twelve apostles with equal powers does not decide it. The promiscuous use of the term, Bishops and Elders does not decide it. The separation of Paul and Barnabas to a particular work does not decide it, and if the ordination of Timothy *by* an Apostle, in connexion *with* others, termed a "Presbytery," decide any thing, it is not in favor of Congregationalism. If then there are no other passages referring to the subject, and testimonies more explicit, it must remain undecided, and the most that can be said, will be that the whole is a matter of mere conjecture. Let it be observed too, these passages, or rather the construction put upon them, forms the strength of the Congregational cause. Upon them it is chiefly rested, not only in the discourse under consideration but by all its advocates. Consequently, as these testimonies are deficient, or weak or obscure, must the cause itself be deficient, or weak, or obscure. And if in order to sustain that cause, a construction is forced upon these indecisive passages at variance with other explicit declarations of scripture, then is that cause maintained in opposition to the scripture. Then is it to be numbered among the "subsequent establishments" which are "of no weight and of no authority against the Bible."

CONSTITUTION AND MINISTRY

OF THE

PRIMITIVE CHURCH.



OUR attention having been directed to those passages of scripture upon which are grounded the claims of the Congregational Society, to Divine authority in regard to its constitution and ministry, a brief, but, as it is trusted, a candid consideration of the full force of the evidences adduced, has led to the conclusion that they furnish no such *example* as the founders and advocates of the "Congregational order," "supposed they had for their direction." As regards the government and discipline of that Society, so far are these from being sustained by scripture example, that even the very passages referred to, in their support, go directly to sanction that mode of government and discipline in opposition to which they are established. The authority conferred upon the Apostles, by our Lord himself, illustrated by that exercised over the churches by St. Paul, especially in the instance of the Corinthian church, not only disproves the assertion, so positively uttered, that "the whole power was in the Church ;" but establishes beyond refutation, the pre-eminent powers of the ministry. Without advancing any further testimonies then, the very proofs upon which our assailants rest their cause decide against them. As respects the ministry, it is worthy of remark, that while several passages which do furnish positive evidence on the subject are kept out of view, others are introduced which either have no reference to the matter of ordination, or determine nothing in favor of the cause for which an appeal is made to them, evidently requiring illustration from other instances of primitive practice. The equality of the twelve Apostles, in no way affects the existence of inferior orders. That Bishops and Elders were names appropriated to individuals of the same order, does not disallow the existence

of a higher order, termed Apostles. That Paul and Barnabas, men possessing apostolic authority, were recommended to the grace of God at Antioch, for aught that we are told, by other Apostles, furnishes nothing whatever, illustrative of the primitive power of ordination ; nor yet is the matter at issue, determined by the ordination of Timothy, Bishop of Ephesus, by the hands of St. Paul, with the concurrence of a Presbytery, composed of we know not whom, it might have been Apostles. Of all these circumstances, and they are the strength of our opponent's cause, there is not that single one which, in any respect, favors them. If then, the portions of Scripture, which have been advanced upon the subject of the ministry are all that have a bearing upon the subject—if there be nothing further to enable us to understand the truth of the matter, then so far as Scripture is concerned, the case is undecided—it is a mere matter of conjecture, and mankind are left at liberty to suppose Presbyterianism or even Episcopacy the primitive institution. But to whichever side the bias of his mind may determine any man or men, they have thus far, no Scripture to justify or sustain them in the conclusion ; *this* is the Church which Christ himself established—*this* is “the purest sample of the primitive Church, now in the world ;” *that* is “opposition to the finger of God” *that* is “hostility to the Divine influence ;” *that* is “an effort of the adversary to raise a storm ;” and if the government and discipline of a church affect its integrity, we do not hesitate to leave it to our assailants to determine, if they will render their verdict according to the evidences of Scripture, which is *the purest sample*, and which the *opposition*, the *hostility*, the *effort of the adversary*. But, thank God, we are not left destitute of sufficient light to guide the *willing mind* in an unerring way—we are furnished with some evident marks to lead us to the fold of the Redeemer—to assure us whether or not, we are continuing in the Apostle's fellowship, in communion with the ministry of Christ's appointment—to enable us to judge whether we are receiving or despising the authorised “ambassadors for Christ”—to receive whom we are taught upon high authority is to receive Christ Jesus himself—to despise whom, is, upon no less authority, to despise the blessed Redeemer, “who is God over all.” From the *belief* announced, with such an air of confidence, “that Jesus Christ established a church,” in which “the full and ultimate power is given to the body of believers,” in which “the power of government is placed entirely in the members”—in which “the power of discipline, the

whole power," is placed "in the Church"—in which too, there was "no superior order in the ministry"—we appeal to the word of God, in support of the explicit declarations, that in the Church of Christ as originally constituted, the power of government and discipline was vested in the ministry, while the supreme authority and power to ordain, was vested in a superior order of that ministry, exclusively of other orders. As our assailant appears not unwilling to rest the merits of the case, upon the example which Scripture furnishes, without requiring any positive precept to enforce conformity, the necessity is spared of showing, that whatever Scripture assures us was authorised by Christ, or his inspired apostles, is the only safe course for us to pursue ; and that what we there find to have been dictated by the spirit of God, must have been pleasing to him, and is therefore enforced upon the observance of every one, who would do the will of his Creator, by the most solemn and binding sanctions.*

But notwithstanding the imposing authority which has set the seal of its worthlessness upon the "testimony of the fathers"—notwithstanding that the wisdom and erudition of the Pastor and people "of the First Ecclesiastical Society of Saybrook," have decided against the learned and pious among mankind—notwithstanding it may appear like presumption in him to pay so little regard to the decisions of an authority so overwhelming—the writer cannot resist the strong disposition which he feels, to indulge a little liberty of judgment—to pay a little deference to the testimonies of men, who readily gave their lives in attestation of the truths they record—to attach some weight to their evidence, who did not hesitate, at the sacrifice of every earthly consideration, to transmit the institutions of the gospel pure as they had received them, down to those who can repay their zeal and fidelity with contumely and contempt. He cannot deny himself the privilege of a direct appeal to their testimony, if it be only to show what reliance is to be placed upon the assertions of one who ranks Pastor of a Church which is not only a "*great patron of free researches into truth,*" but a "*great advocate for a pious, learned ! and evangelical ministry*" ! ! Nor, let it be understood, do the advocates of Episcopacy rest upon the "testimony of the Fathers," to give to it divine authority. They appeal to that testimony as justifying their

"Whatever Church officers the scriptures have established as standing officers, are appointed by God himself. The church therefore, is bound to receive them as having been thus appointed, and to take effectual care that they always exist."—Dwight's Theological Serm. cl.

interpretation of Scripture upon the subject. They learn from that testimony, credible as any uninspired record under heaven, not merely what were the opinions of the writers, but what were the existing facts which they record, and finding among these the universal establishment of Episcopacy, or three orders in the ministry, during the very earliest period, down to which ecclesiastical history extends, they argue indeed, the incredibility of the supposition, that any other organization could have given way to it without some record of a change so great; they can scarcely believe that an institution, bearing the solemn sanction of divine origin and appointment, could have been superseded throughout the wide bounds of the christian world, and yet no memorial remain of the fact. Still this is not the ground on which they rest. They are as prompt as any to admit, "that all subsequent opinions and establishments are of no weight, and of no authority, against the Bible;" yet it would be madness to reject the light of such evidence, in the interpretation of Scripture; and when they find the obvious sense of Scripture coinciding with history, they avail themselves of both to justify their conclusions. But in this matter they yield not *half* the submission to "the testimony of the Fathers," which others do in respect to infant baptism, and the Lord's day, and the canon of Scripture.

Of Ignatius, we are told, that the seven Epistles, ascribed to him and usually termed genuine, "are considered as dubious in many points," and that, "even if they were all true, his testimony would not favor the idea of a diocesan Bishop." As to the dubious character of these epistles, it will suffice to quote the language of the very Dr. Miller, whose attempt to discredit them, has met with wondrous acceptance among those who found it might serve their turn. He is compelled to admit, that "*the great body of learned men consider the smaller Epistles of Ignatius as, in the main, the real works of the writer whose name they bear.*" But "his testimony does not favor the idea of a diocesan Bishop—for he uniformly addresses the Bishop and Presbyters of a single Church; and never speaks of a Bishop whose authority was over many churches." If, by this latter declaration, it be meant that the jurisdiction of a single Bishop was restricted to the church of a single district, comprising several congregations, the declaration is unquestionably true—no one can dispute it. It is precisely what Episcopalians maintain. If it mean, that his jurisdiction was limited to a single Congregation, still the fact would little accord with the Congregational order. A Bishop, Pres.

byters, and Deacons are three orders, whether associated with many congregations, or a single one. But that Ignatius “uniformly addresses the Bishop and Presbyters of a single Congregation,” is an assertion entirely destitute of foundation. *He uniformly addresses no Bishop or Presbyter whatever.* With the exception of that to Polycarp, all his genuine epistles are addressed to *the churches*, respectively named in them. When he speaks in them moreove^r, of heir Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons, *they* furnish not a particle of evidence, that these officers were limited to a single Congregation. So much for assertion. That the Bishops he mentions, were not Diocesan Bishops; that they were restricted to a single congregation, is rendered highly improbable by the fact, that he uniformly enumerates the Presbyters and Deacons in connexion with and as being subject to one single Bishop. One of his epistles likewise is addressed to the Church at Ephesus—the very Church which in St. Paul’s time had its number of Presbyters whom he called together at Miletus—that Church in which Timothy had been left with power and authority, “to charge some” with respect to the doctrines which they were to teach, as distinct from others—to ordain, sit in judgment upon, and rebuke an Elder. In that very Church, subject to their Apostle Timothy, were several “elders,”* or as they were then termed, Bishops. This the author of the “Retrospect” himself, maintains. Paul says he “writes (?) to the Elders of Ephesus, and addresses them as Bishops, and each of these Bishops, he informs us, was “the senior” among “several elders,” who were frequently found in the primitive Church; as many Bishops, then as there were, so many Churches there were. Consequently, at Ephesus there were several Churches in the time of St. Paul and Timothy. Therefore, unless it can be shown that in a very short period, Christianity was on the decline, in a church too addressed as “deservedly happy,” and “blessed through the greatness and fulness of God,” Onesimus, Bishop of Ephesus, must have been Bishop of more than a single congregation. The same remarks will apply to the Church at Antioch upon the admission of the “Retrospect,” that there were there “several Bishops” or *senior Elders*.

Ignatius was Bishop of that same Antioch in Syria, yet he speaks of his destitute Church as the “Church of Syria.”† He was therefore

* 1 Tim. v. 17, 20

† Epistle to Romans.

“Bishop of Syria,”* as he terms himself, of that whole region thro’ which St. Paul went “confirming *the Churches*.”† The internal evidence of the Epistles in connexion with the record of scripture, then fully substantiates the position that the Bishop of whom Ignatius speaks was *not* “the Bishop of a single Church,” that he *does* “speak of a Bishop whose authority was over many [particular] Churches.” This application of the term is abundantly manifest, without appealing to the overwhelming testimonies of subsequent writers who universally confirm it.

Let us now see, how far “the example of the Apostolic Churches” which Ignatius addresses, furnished “our Fathers” reason for *supposing* “they had [that] for their direction,” when “they acknowledged no superior order in the ministry,” and in the government and discipline of the church “supposed the power to be placed entirely in the members.”

In his Epistle to the Ephesians, Ignatius expressly declares, “The Bishops appointed unto the utmost bounds of the earth, are sent by the will of Jesus Christ.” “It is therefore fitting that you should by all means, glorify Jesus Christ who hath glorified you—that being subject to your Bishop, and the Presbytery ye may be wholly and thoroughly sanctified.”—“Wherefore, it will become you to run together according to the will of your Bishop.”—“Let us take heed that we do not set ourselves against the Bishop, that we may be subject to God.”—“Obeying your Bishop and the Presbytery with an entire affection.”

In his Epistle to the Magnesians he writes, “It will become you not to use your Bishop too familiarly upon the account of his youth, but to yield all reverence to him according to the power of God the Father—as also I perceive that your holy Presbyters do.” “I can never think, that such as call their governor Bishop, but do all things without him, have a good conscience, seeing they are not gathered together thoroughly according to God’s commandment.”—“But be ye united to your Bishop”—“neither do ye any thing without your Bishop and Presbyters.”

In his Epistle to the Philadelphians, he affirms, “I cried whilst I was among you; I spake with a loud voice; attend to the Bishop and to the Presbytery, and to the Deacons.”—“The spirit spake, saying, on this wise: do nothing without the Bishop”—“For as many as are of God,

* Epistle to the Romans.

† Acts xv. 41.

and of Jesus Christ, are also with their Bishop"—"There is one Bishop, together with his Presbytery and the Deacons my fellow-servants."

The Smyrneans he admonishes, "See that ye all follow your Bishop as Jesus Christ, the Father; and the Presbytery as the Apostles, and reverence the Deacons as the command of God. Let no man do any thing of what belongs to the Church separately from the Bishop. Let that eucharist be looked upon as well established which is either offered by the Bishop, or by him to whom the Bishop has given his consent."—"It is a good thing to have regard both to God and to the Bishop; he that honors the Bishop, shall be honored of God—but he that does any thing without his knowledge, ministers unto the Devil."—"I salute your very worthy Bishop, and your venerable Presbytery, and your Deacons my fellow servants."

Through "Polycarp, Bishop of the Church which is at Smyrna," he writes to the members of that Church, "Hearken unto the Bishop, that God may also hearken unto you. My soul be security for them that submit to their Bishop, with their Presbyters and Deacons, and may my portion be together with theirs in God."

"The Church which is at Tralles," he salutes as "continuing in the Apostolical character"—"For whereas," adds he, "ye are subject to your Bishop as to Jesus Christ, ye appear to me to live not after the manner of men, but according to Jesus Christ. It is therefore necessary that as ye do so, without your Bishop you should do nothing; also be ye subject to your Presbyters as to the Apostles of Jesus Christ—The Deacons also, as being the ministers of the mysteries of Jesus Christ, must by all means please all—For they are not the ministers of meat and drink, but of the Church of God."—"Being subject to your Bishop as to the command of God; and so likewise to the Presbytery." "It becomes every one of you, especially the Presbyters, to refresh the Bishop, to the honor of the Father, of Jesus Christ, and of the Apostles."—"Guard yourselves against such persons [the heretics,] and that you will do, if you are not puffed up, but continue inseparable from Jesus Christ, our God, and from your Bishop, and from the commands of the Apostles. He that is within the altar is pure: but he that is without, that is, that does any thing without the Bishop, and Presbyters and Deacons, is not pure in his conscience"—"without these, the Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons, there is no church."

Now where is the example of these Apostolic Churches which

directs to the acknowledgment of no superior order in the ministry ; where the slightest ground for the supposition that in the government and discipline, the power was placed entirely in the members of the Church. The Epistles of Ignatius record the fact, that in the Apostolic Churches to which he wrote, there were in his day existing, upon the firm persuasion of their divine appointment and authority, three orders of ministers, to the highest of which belonged the supreme power ; and Ignatius, be it remembered, lived in the age of the Apostles. He undoubtedly must have been acquainted with the state of the Church, under their immediate direction—he must have known, if any man could know, what the divine institution authorized ; what the practice of inspired men sanctioned. And is it credible, that an individual who readily surrendered his life in attestation of what he declared, would wilfully misrepresent, or that with the advantages and opportunities which he possessed, he could be ignorant of the circumstances of the Church, in the times of the Apostles ? Could he possibly have ascribed that importance, which he manifestly does ascribe, to the recognition of three orders in the Christian ministry, when he knew, as he must have known had it been the fact, that these were an innovation upon the ordinance of Christ and his spirit ? The passages quoted too, were written by Ignatius while on a journey from Antioch to Rome, under the conduct of the Roman soldiery and the sentence of the Emperor, to be thrown to the wild beasts and destroyed—and could he with the prospect of death before him, and in which he gloried for the truth's sake, could he (to repeat the question,) thus write of these orders, as the appointment of God, and essential to the very being of his church, while at the same time he knew, as he must have known, were it the fact, that no such distinction existed or was authorised in the divinely constituted Church and Ministry ? It is totally incredible. Ignatius, the companion of Apostles and Martyrs, himself a Martyr, must have known and must have represented the truth. He could not be mistaken, he could not misrepresent. His testimony is to be believed.

As for “Polycarp of Smyrna,” what though he “does not *mention the name* of Bishop :” is that evidence that there was no such office in the primitive Church ? The holy martyr, Ignatius, the contemporary of Polycarp, does most unequivocally mention the name and assert the superior character of the Bishop, in connexion with the subordinate ministry ; and will any one pretend that the silence

of one, is stronger testimony than the explicit declarations of another. Besides, our erudite assailant had just informed us, that "there were several Bishops," perhaps in the Church at Philippi, to which Polycarp's Epistle was addressed, as there were "at Ephesus and at Antioch." To be sure, he considers them upon an equality with presbyters. Still their rank does not affect the question of their existence, and Polycarp's neglect to "mention the name Bishop," would as much decide against the existence of the one acknowledged order called by that name, or of the *senior order* whom it is supposed to have designated, as it would against that of the superior order. If indeed Bishops were of the more ordinary grade of ministers, the silence respecting them would be much more unaccountable, than it is upon the reasonable supposition, that at the time of their being written to, the Church was destitute of a Bishop, in the higher sense of the term. And what is there remarkable, that in an Epistle, but about half the length of an ordinary sermon, the writer does not introduce every circumstance which the history of the Church might call up. Nor is it true, as asserted, that Polycarp "confines himself to the term Presbyter." He speaks of "the Deacons as the ministers of God in Christ," and directs the Philippians to be "subject to the Priests and Deacons, as unto God and Christ." His Epistle moreover is addressed to the Church to which he wrote, in the name of "Polycarp, and *the Presbyters* that are with him;" not the *other* Presbyters, remark, as he would have said, were he himself one of the order, but "Polycarp, and *the Presbyters*." But however some may choose to interpret his sentiments, he fully subscribes to what Ignatius had enjoined, saying of "the Epistles of Ignatius which he wrote unto us, together with what others of his have come to our hands," by which the Philippians might "be greatly profited," that "they treat of faith and patience, and of all things that pertain to edification in the Lord Jesus."

It is further asserted, that "Clement of Rome never speaks of three orders." But from assertion, let us appeal to fact. Admonishing the Corinthians how it "behoves them to take care they do all things in order, whatsoever our Lord has commanded us to do," "that God has ordained by his supreme will and authority, by what persons their offerings and service to God are to be performed," he instructs them that "care must be had of the persons that minister unto him." "For," adds he, "the Chief Priest has his proper services, and to the Priests their proper place is appointed! and to the Levites

appertain their proper ministries ; and the Layman is confined within the bounds of what is commanded to Laymen.”—“ Let every one of you therefore, brethren, bless God in his proper station—not exceeding the rule of his service that is appointed to him.” Now not to insist that writing to men over whom the Jewish ministry was not then exercised, the writer applies terms derived from it, to the different orders of the Christian ministry : the simple question is asked, what propriety could there be, in illustrating the Christian’s duty of subordination, by such reference ; when no parallel existed between the Jewish and Christian ministry, in respect to a diversity of orders ? Again he says “ the Apostles having received their command, being orderly sent by Christ, and preaching through countries and cities, they appointed the first fruits of their conversion, to be Bishops and Ministers over such as should afterwards believe, having first proved them by the spirit. Nor was this any new thing, seeing that long before it was written concerning Bishops and Deacons, “ I will appoint their overseers in righteousness, and their ministers in faith.”* And what wonder, if they to whom such a work was committed by God in Christ, established such officers as we before mentioned. Here then we have, first Apostles, secondly Bishops, thirdly Deacons ; the Apostles orderly sent by Christ and establishing Bishops or overseers, and Ministers, or Deacons over the believers—the *Apostles* establishing these as distinct from themselves. The remark of St. Clement, may conclude his testimony, that “ the Apostles knew by our Lord Jesus Christ, that there should contentions arise upon the account of the ministry, and therefore they appointed persons as we have before said, and then gave direction how, when they should die, other chosen and approved men should succeed in the ministry.” The testimony of the early Fathers then, furnishes the most satisfactory evidences of the belief and practice of their day, and it is a question worthy of some consideration, whether with their peculiar advantages and opportunities, their simple *belief* is not entitled to as much credit, as the opinions of any men of modern times : whether the institutions of the Church in the very age of the Apostles, when these writers lived, the *facts* they record, are not to be regarded as of Apostolic, that is, of Divine authority ; and whether the passages of scripture which have already been noticed, illustrated by the ascertained practice of the age, when they were

* A version of Isaiah, lx. 17.

written, would not conclusively establish the divine appointment of three orders in the ministry, to the first of which was entrusted the supreme authority in the government and discipline of the Church.

But we come now in opposition to the *suppositions* and *belief*, advanced with such an appearance of suspicion, to show from the positive declarations of the scriptures themselves, that there was a "superior order in the ministry,"—that of three orders the highest only was invested with the right of ordination—that to them belonged the general superintendence of the Churches and the chief exercise of discipline, and that Presbyters did not possess this right, and these powers. It matters not, by *what names* the several orders were distinguished; the question is, did these orders exist and in the nature of them is there aught, requiring their perpetuity? The existence of two orders is virtually admitted, although to preserve the alleged equality in the ministry, there is a distinction made as if there were but one order in the *ministry*, while in the *church* there were two *offices* under which the inferior order in the ministry is ranked. That there was such an order in the Church as that designated by the several names, Bishops, Presbyters, and Elders is universally agreed. That there was a distinct class of persons called Deacons none deny, but by some their station is denominated an *office* in the church, not an order in the ministry. Upon what grounds the distinction is made, it is difficult to imagine. Whatever some who, at the present day assume the name, may esteem the duties of the office, the primitive Deacon was commissioned to preach and to baptize as we find Philip engaged in doing.* Hence we infer that his was an order in the ministry; and that it is not only the right, but the solemn duty of all who hold that sacred office, to preach and baptize likewise. But this order was not authorised to administer confirmation; for we find that when through the preaching of Philip, "Samaria had received the word of God," Peter and John were sent thither, who "laid their hands on them that were baptized, in the name of the Lord Jesus,"† thus performing a rite, to which Philip was incompetent. Neither did this order in any case ordain, or exercise jurisdiction. Nor yet did the Presbyters either confirm, ordain or exercise the highest jurisdiction.

But there was a superior order which was invested with this three-fold authority. Such order we find in those who had the appella-

* Acts viii. 5, 12, 35, 38, 40.

† Acts viii. 14, 16, 17.

on of Apostles, and of these were "the eleven,"* Matthias,† Barnabas, Paul,‡ Sylvanus or Silas, Timothy,§ "James the Lord's brother,"|| Epaphroditus,¶ Andronicus and Junia,** and others denominated "the Apostles of the Churches."†† That this was an order of men exercising authority over the Churches, in government and discipline, evidence the most conclusive has been already furnished,‡‡ and more will presently be added. That they possessed the exclusive right of confirmation, has also been shown. That to them and not to Presbyters, belonged the authority to ordain, can be clearly established. It is evident from the frequent enumeration of the several classes, as distinct orders, that the Apostles were distinct from the Presbyters or Elders. Oftentimes there is mention made of "Apostles and Elders"§§ of "Apostles and Elders and brethren."||| The enumeration of "Bishops and Deacons,"¶¶ is allowed to be sufficient evidence of their distinction. "Apostles and Brethren"*** undeniably indicate "two grades of distinction." Therefore we conclude that Apostles and Elders were distinct also. It is unnecessary to enter into any argument to prove that the Apostles were pre-eminent in other respects than on account of the *extraordinary* powers with which they were invested, or of their peculiar duties. The whole reasoning of our opponent is conducted upon the ground that the Apostles were "of the same standing and of equal authority," with all christian ministers; else it might be shown that others exercised extraordinary gifts, and we have seen that others who were not of the chosen twelve, were named Apostles. It is sufficient that the Apostles and Elders were two distinct orders. Were they in all respects upon an equality? then have we two classes in the ministry, divinely established, with nothing but a name to distinguish them, and no reason for their distinction. We leave the difficulty to be solved by those who contrive it; and to aid them in the solution, affirm that while presbyters are every where seen to be subject to the Apostles, the Apostles are never found subject to any Presbyter whatever.—The apostles had authority to ordain. They ordained Matthias to

* Acts i. 26. † Acts i. 25, 26. ‡ Acts xiv. 4, 14. 1 Cor. ix. 6. compared with ve. 5.
§ Compare 1 Thes i. 1. with ii. 6.

|| Gal. i. 19. Matt. xiii. 55, compared with John vii. 5, proves that the brother of our Lord was distinct from the Apostles of that name; of whom one was the son of Zebedee and the other of Alphaeus. Matt. x. 2, 3, iv. 21.

¶ ἀποστολον. Phil. ii. 25.

** Rom. xvi. 7.

†† ἀποστολοι εκκλησιων 2 Cor. viii. 23.

‡‡ See page 19—23.

§§ Acts xv. 2, 6, 22. xvi. 4.

||| Acts xv. 23.

¶¶ Phil. i. 1.

*** Acts xi. 1.

fill the place of Judas in the number of the apostles.* They ordained the seven Deacons.† Paul and Barnabas, two of the apostolic order, as they travelled through the countries to which they had been sent, “ordained them elders in every Church.”‡ Timothy was ordained to the office and invested with the powers of an Apostle or Bishop—with “the gift of God”—“by the putting on” of St. Paul’s hands in connexion with the presbytery,§ whatever this name may import. The Apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Apostle Timothy, most clearly and explicitly recognizes, at the same time, his superior authority in the government and discipline of the Church, his superiority and power over the presbyters, and his exclusive right to ordain. Timothy had been left by St. Paul at Ephesus, to exercise over the Church there and the elders who belonged to it, the powers peculiar to his order.|| The aged Apostle writes to his “dearly beloved son in the faith,” to instruct him how he ought to behave himself in the—Church of the living God.”¶ He prescribes to him the qualifications necessary for those persons who were to be ordained presbyters and deacons,** and solemnly charges Timothy as a responsible person, impartially to observe the directions given to him.†† These clearly manifest, that he singly possessed authority, to charge some respecting the doctrines they were to teach;‡‡ to receive an accusation against an elder;§§ to rebuke them that sinned;||| to honor those that rule well;¶¶ to lay hands on such as were to be ordained;*** and to commit the things which he had heard, to faithful men, who should teach others also.††† So Titus was left in Crete, with the express purpose that he should “set in order the things that were wanting, and ordain elders in every city;”§§§ that he should rebuke sharply, and with all authority;|||| that he should admonish or reject the heretic.¶¶¶ Will it be said that Timothy and Titus were mere Congregational ministers, “of the same standing and of equal authority” with “the

* Compare Acts i. 26, with verse 22.

† Acts vi. 6.

‡ Acts xiv. 23.

§ 2 Tim. i. 6. 1 Tim. iv. 14.

|| 1 Tim. i. 3.

¶ 1 Tim. i. 2. 2 Tim. i. 2. 1 Tim. iii. 14. 15.

** 1 Tim. iii.

†† 1 Tim. v. 21, vi. 13, 14.

‡‡ 1 Tim. i. 3.

§§ 1 Tim. v. 19

||| 1 Tim. v. 20.

¶¶ 1 Tim. v. 17.

*** 1 Tim. v. 22.

††† 2 Tim. ii. 2.

§§§ Titus i. 5.

In his commentary upon this place, Calvin himself, remarks: “here we learn that there was not any equality among the ministers of the Church, but that one was placed over the rest in authority and counsel.”

|||| Titus i. 13. ii. 15.

¶¶¶ Titus iii. 10.

teachers in the Church.” And does Congregationalism then, permit a single minister to exercise such offices in different cities and independent churches? or is any thing like the foregoing, recorded in respect to presbyters? Were they authorised to receive an accusation against those grievous wolves, which should arise, speaking perverse things? Had they the power to rebuke them, to charge them what doctrines they were to teach—when occasion required it? If they had, why send Timothy to attend to all these things in a Church which numbered its Bishops or elders? Nor is there a shadow of evidence that Elders or Presbyters ever ordained. The testimonies produced in support of such a supposition, as has already been seen, furnish it not the slightest authority; and not a single instance can be adduced from Scripture to justify it. That they exercised a degree of authority in government and discipline, is undeniable—but never over the ministry. Their authority was confined to their respective flocks—while they themselves were subject to the higher order. The passages which prove the superiority of this order, of course, establish the inferior rank of the other. To learn the Scriptural powers of a pre-byter, we may refer among other instances, to the charge delivered by St. Paul to the elders of Ephesus, assembled at Miletus.* There the Apostle directs them to “*take heed*” unto themselves—to *take heed* unto “all the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made [them] overseers”—as shepherds “to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood”—to “watch” against the “grievous wolves” which should enter in among them; against those who should arise from among themselves, “speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” Here we find no reference whatever, to their powers of ordination; no recognition whatever of their authority, to exercise discipline over others in the ministry, although an occasion is stated which would loudly call for it, if they indeed, possessed the authority. But, there is not the most remote intimation, of their holding any such powers as were indisputably exercised by the Apostles, and were manifestly recognized in Timothy and Titus. In perfect consistency with this view, we find St. Paul giving to Timothy directions respecting the qualifications of a Bishop or Presbyter, whose duty is represented to be, that he “take care of the Church of God.”† St. Peter, likewise exhorts the elders to “feed the flock of God,” “taking the over-

* Acts xx. 28—35.

† 1 Tim iii. 5

sight thereof,"* but in neither case do we hear a syllable about ordination, or "equal standing and authority." In the Church of Ephesus, then, we find most assuredly three distinct orders in the ministry. An Apostle, Timothy, possessing the exclusive power to ordain, to receive an accusation against, to sit in judgment, and pronounce sentence upon a Presbyter. Presbyters or Bishops, subject to him in the exercise of such powers, and Deacons, capable of promotion to a higher degree upon using their office well. How utterly vain the attempt to find in Congregationalism the traces of a pure sample of such a Church.†

But suppose, notwithstanding all the evidences to the contrary, that under the divine appointment, there existed but a single order in the ministry ; that Christ, and under the inspiration of the spirit, his Apostles, recognized but one order, possessed of equal power ; that to them, and to them alone, belonged the power of ordination, where in such case, are we now to look for that order ? From the ear-

* 1 Peter v. 2.

† Indeed, so positive and so conclusive are the evidences of a "superior order in the ministry," in the Apostolic Church, that the fact is generally conceded. Such wild assertions, as deny to the Apostles any "power over the Churches," or limit theirs to "the equal authority of the teachers in the Church, a Presbytery of elders," are rarely to be met with. But to obviate the force of the argument, in behalf of Episcopacy, it is usual to contend that theirs were extraordinary powers, and that the office of the Apostles was to terminate with their decease. As this however is not the ground assumed in the "half century sermon," it is sufficient to remark, that the supposition of the temporary nature of the Apostolic office, is not sustained by any scripture intimation, and is contrary to facts. It has never yet ceased. The testimony of the Fathers, abundantly proves, that under the name Bishops, the Apostles had successors to themselves, in all the functions essential to the well being of the Church. Apostles, Presbyters, and Deacons were appointed in the Church under the authority of divine direction. They who presume to reject them from the Church, should be well persuaded of their right so to do. What was the divine intention in regard to the perpetuity of the ministry, under its primitive organization, if we are permitted to appeal to facts, facts will show. If Bishops actually succeed to the Apostles, we may presume it was intended they should so succeed. How is the fact to be determined? from scripture? must we look to the writings of the Apostles to learn what occurred after their departure? No, we must appeal to the testimony of the Fathers, of Apostolic men, who knew the mind and acted under the immediate direction of those inspired men. If all Scripture were doubtful on this point, unquestionably the records of history would be admitted in illustration. Especially then, when we find a ministry in several orders, existing under divine appointment, and in the writings of the Fathers evidences of a corresponding diversity of orders, still continued, and spreading with the growth of the Church, the inference is certainly just, that that institution was designed to be permanent.

liest period of its history, down to the sixteenth century, we observe three orders of ministers universally existing in the Christian Church—always and every where. Two of these therefore, must be an innovation upon the divine appointment. If Christ has instituted a single order of ministers, with equal powers, and we find three orders in existence, with unequal powers, then two of these orders are exercising a ministry which does not belong to them. And which are these two? Deacons cannot be of the original single appointment, nor yet Presbyters. Both Presbyters and Deacons want the authority to ordain, so essential to the perpetuity of the Christian ministry, which is designed to continue “even to the end of the world.” That order which combines all the powers of every existing grade of the Christian ministry, including the power of ordination, must of course be essential. If then, one order alone is to be admitted, that is the only one which can be essential to the Christian Church. In such case, Presbyters and Deacons, i. e. they who hold the limited offices and powers exercised by these, are no ministers of Christ. The order of Bishops is the only one of divine institution, and the rest of consequence are intruders into the ministry. If but a single order can claim the authority of divine institution, it must be that which is commissioned to preach, to administer the sacraments, and to ordain. Any order which does not possess these powers, if a single order were constituted, must be an innovation. Hence upon the supposition, those termed Bishops are the only authorized ministers of Christ, and all Presbyters are intruders into the hallowed office. Let Congregationalists settle the difficulty.

But after all, it may be asked, what possible interest can the Congregational cause possess, in the question between the authority of a Presbytery and that of a Bishop, in the matter of ordination? Suppose every claim of the latter to be decidedly and completely demolished, and every pretension of the former, as entirely and firmly established, in what single respect is Congregationalism therefore the better? Suppose that Apostles, Presbyters, and Deacons were all equal in the Church, and their successors in the ministry possessed the full authority of those we deem the highest order. Suppose too, in direct opposition to the word of God, that Timothy and Titus were not of an order of men, having exclusively the power not only to sit in judgment upon, and to rebuke, but also to *ordain* Presbyters. What advantage can derive to Congregationalism from such admissions? It is as far remote from Scripture authority, upon the acknowl-

edgment of the Presbyterian claim, as upon that of the divine right of Episcopacy itself. There is between the Congregationalist and the consistent Presbyterian, an essential distinction, as wide as that which places the former in opposition to Episcopacy, and still wider than that which separates the two latter. The principles of the Presbyterian and Episcopalian both assert the divine institution of the ministry, i. e. of an order of men "to preach the word, administer the sacraments, dispense discipline—and to commit these powers to other faithful men."* Both recognize the necessity of an authority derived in direct succession from Christ, the Head of the Church, and source of all power therein. Both "maintain that none are regularly invested with the ministerial character, or can with propriety be recognized in this character, but those who have been set apart to the office, by persons lawfully clothed with the power of ordaining." They differ as to the manner in which the succession is continued. While one maintains that it was to be handed down through the line of Bishops, the other recognizes the Presbytery as the constituted means of perpetuating the ministerial office. But Congregationalism acknowledges the divine appointment and authority of neither. If we are to believe the Pastor of "the purest sample of the primitive Church now in the world," that Church is "invested with the power," the unalienable right—the power characteristic of the genuine Church of Christ, "of choosing their own ministers." This expression indeed, in itself considered, asserts nothing more than the privilege in which the "*Prelatical Churches*" are sometimes indulged—but illustrated by the history and practice of "the purest sample"—it conveys ideas as utterly at variance with the principles of Presbyterianism, as it can be with those of Episcopacy. "They [our Fathers] believed that a Church was invested with power to choose their own ministers." That the inspired scriptures authorize or sanction the exercise of any such power, we are not assured, and have some reason to doubt. "*Our Fathers*, however, believed" so, and though "no *testimony* of *the Fathers* can give divine authority to any institution whatever," yet the "*belief*" of "*our fathers*" is perfectly conclusive. The expression illustrated by Congregational practice, conveys the unfounded idea, the absurd position, that a body of men, possessing no pretensions whatever to any such powers, is competent to invest an individual with the powers of the minis-

* Miller's Letters, Ed. 1807, p. 8.

terial office. "The Churches of Connecticut originally maintained, that *the right of choosing and settling their ministers,*" as well as "of exercising discipline, and performing all juridical acts, *was in the Church,* when properly organized; and *they denied all external or foreign power of Presbyteries,* synods, general councils or assemblies. Hence, they were termed *Congregational Churches.* It was the general opinion, among the ministers, "that Elders ought to lay on hands in ordination, *if there were a Presbytery in the Church,* but if there were not, the Church might appoint some other Elders, or a *number of the brethren* to that service." "They held, that ordination did not constitute the essentials of the ministerial office—but the qualifications for office, the *election of the Church* guided by the rule of Christ, and *the acceptance* of the Pastor elect." "They maintained that all the Pastor's office and power, was confined to his own Church and Congregation, and that the administering Baptism and the Lord's Supper in other Churches was irregular."*

The same authentic record which furnishes these "testimonies," also informs us, that among other instances of the same kind, the *first ordained pastor* of "the first ecclesiastical society of Saybrook," was invested with ministerial office, not by men qualified according to "the rule of Christ," and scripture, practice to confer the authority, but, "that *hands were imposed,* by *two or three of the principal brethren,* whom the Church had appointed to that service." His successor too the "moderator of that memorable synod," which formed the "mighty bond"—the "monumental pillar," was ordained in like manner. "A council of ministers and churches, assisted at his ordination", we are told, "but the imposition of hands was performed by the brethren. The council considered it as an irregular proceeding, but the brethren were so tenacious, of what they esteemed their right, that they could not be prevented, without much inconvenience."† And is it necessary to enter upon an argument to show, that they who come as "Ambassadors for Christ,"‡ as ministers of reconciliation,|| "and stewards of the mysteries of God,"§ must derive their authority, from him in whose name they act, or be guilty of high presump-

* Trumbull's Hist. Con. vol. I. p. 299. Repeated instances of this kind of ordination occur: among them, the famous leather mitten ordination at Stratford, when Elder Brinsmaid immortalised himself, by laying on his hands, with a leather mitten to invest Mr. Chauncy with the authority of a Christian minister.

† 2 Cor. v. 20.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 18.

|| 1 Cor. iv 1.

§ Trumbull's History of Conn. Vol I. pp. 296, 297.

tion? Is it needful to urge, that “no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron,”* when even the blessed “Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest?” He the great head of the church, has “all power—in Heaven and in earth,”† and whosoever presumes to act in his name must unquestionably possess authority so to do, or stand in danger of “perishing in the gainsaying of Core.”‡ And this authority can be conferred, and received only by direct commission, or through a divinely appointed medium. All the christians in the world, combined, says one, can never make a sacrament—nor can they make the word of God, nor can they make or authorize a commissioned minister of Jesus Christ. To have a valid commission, it must come from him. Assuredly, unless he immediately bestows it, none but those whom he has authorised, can convey it. He did appoint the mode of its conveyance, in his commission to the Apostles. What that mode was, scripture and apostolic practice will determine, and it must be at their peril that any choose to deviate therefrom. It is no matter of expediency. Either all possess the right of ministering in the name of Christ, and then they who presume to dispense the right, are usurpers. Or all have not the right, and then they, who presume to exercise, without obtaining it in God’s appointed way, are more criminal still. It is an undeniable fact, that a single instance of lay-ordination, such as was practised, in “the purest sample of the primitive Church,” is not to be found in scripture—“Neither,” observes Ambrose Bishop of Milan, “is it lawful, or permissible, that an inferior should ordain a superior, since no one can bestow that which he has not first received.” The full force of this just remark, the author of the “Retrospect,” admits, in the very face of the Puritan faith, for which he speaks, when inferring from Timothy’s ordination, by a supposed Presbytery, his equality with the Elders. Apply the same reasoning to Congregational pastors, ordained by Laymen, and it proves them mere Laymen still.||

*Heb. v. 4, 5

† Mat. xxviii. 18

‡ Jude ii. Num. xvi.

|| The Presbyterian confession of faith maintains, that “none but ministers of the word, lawfully ordained, have authority to dispense the sacraments.” Chap. xxvii. § 4., at the same time, holding the necessity of an external commission, to render a minister lawfully ordained. Nor have the pure specimens of primitive and Apostolic practice, with which the Congregational Churches abound, escaped the condemnation of their own supporters. That “persons without being ordained ministers of the Gospel—should take upon them, to administer the sacrament of baptism,” is declared by an act of the General Assembly, in 1723, to be a “great

He moreover, who presumes to act in the name of Christ, must not only possess, but give unequivocal proof, that he possesses the authority : otherwise they who bid him "God speed," may be participants in his crime. He may satisfy those to whom he comes, of his right, by working miracles, as did the first Apostles, or by deriving his authority according to the divine appointment, from him who beyond doubt, has the power, and who alone has the power, to bestow it. The Apostles, we have seen, after receiving their great commission, did ordain others, and not only so, they empowered certain men, as Timothy and Titus, to commit the same great trust to those who should succeed them. Was this according to divine appointment, or was it not ? If not, then is the exercise of the ordaining power an unwarrantable assumption on the part of such as attempt it : and those, who come in the name of Christ, must, by supernatural tokens, give evidence of their divine calling. Or if the Apostolic institution was of God's appointment, then in the absence of such miraculous evidences must all, who come in his name, come also in the way which he has ordained.

Compare the distinctive features of that "Church," which is declared, or rather believed to be "the purest sample of the primitive Church," with the scriptural marks of the Church of Christ, and how lamentably defective does it appear in every essential point. The comparison however, is reserved unto the conclusion of these remarks.

abuse and profanation of the holy ordinance." In the same act, a person who is not a "lawfully allowed minister of the Gospel, administering or making a show of administering, the holy sacraments," is declared to profane them, and upon conviction became subject to fine and whipping," "and it cannot be denied," adds Trumbull, "that for persons unordained and entirely unauthorised to administer the sacraments, must be a high profanation of the holy ordinances and a very great misdemeanor." History of Connecticut, vol. ii. 37, 38.

APPEAL FROM SCRIPTURE.



WE come now to the crowning evidence of the whole matter. The "testimony of *the* Fathers," is not worth referring to Scripture authority is comparatively insignificant,—the infallible rule, what "our Fathers believed, supposed, and acknowledged," becomes of inferior moment, even the overwhelming, "*I* believe," loses its consequence. Managed by an adept in the art logical, the weightiest argument, is reserved to the last place, which shall supply all the defects of the preceding evidences, and astound the still incredulous. The summit of the mighty climax is this : it is useless to attend to such delusive testimonies, as those of martyrs and saints of old ; we need not seek to regulate our practice, by the precepts and examples of Scripture and Apostles. The Church which "our Fathers have here formed," though of less than two centuries standing, "has been from Century to Century, growing in numbers, and light, and strength ; and who can doubt." "The experiment has [not yet] been tested two Centuries," still this marvellous Church "has been growing in numbers, and light, and strength, far beyond that time—and who can doubt. But seriously, from scripture and the "testimony of *the* Fathers," and the belief of "our Fathers," an appeal is made to the alleged circumstance, that the Church formed by the Puritan fathers, has been growing in light, and strength, and numbers, and this is relied upon with a confidence, no where allowed to any other testimony. Even the examples of Christ, and the Apostolic Churches, are introduced with a remarkable appearance of suspicion, as to their application. "Our Fathers believed," and "supposed," they sanctioned Congregationalism, but no testimony of *the* or *our* Fathers can give divine authority, to any institution whatever. Growth in light and strength, and numbers must dispel all doubt. If the position here laid down be correct, the just inference must be that a Church, which has diminished in light, and strength, and numbers, is not "the Church which Christ established." "And if we

cast our eyes abroad over the land, do we find none, in their government, discipline and ministry, precisely corresponding with "the purest sample of the primitive Church, now in the World, yet lamentably deteriorated in the three essential points, of *light, strength, and numbers* ? Does this circumstance prove that they are no longer true Churches of Christ ? Then there is great reason to fear, lest the first Ecclesiastical Society of Saybrook, may have forfeited its claim to such a character. For that there has been a "diminution of strength and numbers," the "half century sermon," itself records. But the word of God, and the history of his Church, authorise no such conclusion. At one period, the whole Israelitish Church was reduced to "seven thousand"* souls, while at another, "all the world wondered after the beast,"† and "worshipped" him ; and when He, who spake, as never man spake,‡ who was anointed with the fullness of the spirit, gathered but a "little flock,"§ in the whole course of his ministry, while the Galilean Judas,§ and false Christs, and false prophets, in a short time could number their multitudes, it is astonishing that any such criterion should be adopted. Nor is it a very easy matter to determine in all cases, the measure of light which a Church possesses, or what the term may signify. "The blind who lead the blind,"¶ may think with them, that they are enjoying a wonderful share of illumination, and cry "we see,"** and yet remain enveloped in the gross darkness of spiritual night. So too, growth in strength and numbers is a very equivocal test of "divine favor." The very corruptions of a Church may tend to such results. It may be "adulterated," by other than "anti-republican sentiments." "The laws which came from heaven," may be "sophisticated by" other than "the illusions of imperial or pontifical impositions." Even the laws and institutions of heaven may be perverted to subserve the selfish interests of designing men. Repeatedly have they been so, and what has been, may be again. There is nothing so sacred, nothing so holy, but demagogues and hypocrites have been found, ready to degrade it to an instrument of their unhallowed purposes. Religion and the Church have been, and may be again corrupted, to flatter the pride and self-sufficiency, so natural to the human heart. The distinctive principles of the Gospel, so

* 1 Kings, xix. 18.

† Rev. xiii. 3, 4

‡ John vii. 46.

§ Luke xii. 32.

§ Acts, v. 37.

¶ Luke, vi. 39.

** John, ix. 41.

obnoxious to “the carnal mind,”* to its lofty conceits, and stubborn prejudices, may be so qualified, or kept out of view, as to present no obstacle to their sway. The truth as it is in Jesus, may not be faithfully inculcated. Undue measures may be employed to swell a number, without reference to the capacities and qualifications of those who compose it. Children incapable of counting the cost, may be hurried into a step of which, upon reflection, they find cause to repent. Persons unrenewed and unregenerate, may in a moment of excitement, yield to solicitations, to adopt a course which in after hours, they lament and condemn. Individuals of unholy tempers and unsanctified hearts, destitute of charity and every christian grace—the profane, the dissolute—the abandoned, may augment the numbers. The prophets may prophecy falsely,† and cry peace, peace, where there is no peace,‡ and the people may love to have it so, and, awful reflection, Pastor and people may be treading with *the multitude*, the broad road that leads to death.¶ All or any of these causes, may tend to a Church’s growth in strength and numbers, and these, until it be shown that such may not be the case, can of themselves furnish no evidence of the Divine favor and blessing. Indeed, were it universally and unquestionably true, that growth in strength and numbers, is an evidence of divine favor and approbation, there would be some reason to hope, that many of the “prelatical Churches,” are likewise owned of heaven, for they “have also grown in numbers and strength”—and the hope is humbly cherished that they have grown “in light” also.

But then “have they received all these without the aid of civil establishments? And have they required experimental religion and a change of heart, to be the terms of communion.” “Growth in light, and strength, and numbers,” it would seem, is not then the evidence of divine approbation. Something else is to be taken into the account. No matter how much the prelatical Churches have grown in light, if it has not been without the aid of civil establishments, and upon certain conditions: it is all nought. Now it is affirmed, and the enemies of the Episcopal Church are challenged to disprove the assertion, that the Congregational Church as such, does not require a change of heart as a term of communion; and that if the phrase be understood, the Episcopal Church does require

* Rom. viii. 7.

† Jer. v. 31.

‡ Jer. vi. 14.

¶ Matthew, vii. 13.

both that and experimental religion as terms of communion. Congregational Churches have avowedly, the Episcopal Church never, refused to require "change of heart," as a term of communion. As this is the subject of a favorite slander with those who endeavor to injure the Episcopal Church, in various quarters, it deserves perhaps a little more attention than its repetition in the "Retrospect," entitles it to. They who make the charge, are challenged to substantiate or retract it, or be content to stand before the Christian public in a character not here to be named. But perhaps the oft repeated assertion, after all, may not be so derogatory as is apprehended. What is meant by "change of heart?" If we may judge "by the fruits" * of those who are loudest in charging the want of it upon Episcopalians, with them, and illustrated by their practice, it would seem, alas, too often, to consist in an utter renunciation of every thing like a spirit of charity, of humility, and of conformity to the mind which was in Christ Jesus ;† in the cultivation of a bitter and malignant spirit, a self-righteous frame of mind, a perverseness of will, a degree of spiritual pride, decidedly inconsistent with the principles of the Gospel and its influence upon the heart. In such a sense, the Episcopal Church does not "require a change of heart," as a condition of admission to her communion. On the contrary, she solemnly warns such, of their "grievous crime," to repent, or not presume to profane the emblems of the Redeemer's dying love, by their unhallowed touch.

What the Episcopal Church does require, as terms of communion, may be learnt from the express declarations of her standards, and here alone are they to be sought. The very office by which her members are admitted into the communion of the Church, opens with the express declaration, that "all men are conceived and born in sin, (and that which is born of flesh is flesh,) and they who are in the flesh cannot please God but live in sin"—"Original sin," she says again, "is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth away, contrary to the spirit ; and therefore in every person born into the world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation." (Art. ix.) The condition of man is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good

* Mat. vii. 16.

† Phil. ii. 5.

works, to faith and calling upon God ; wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God, by Christ, preventing us [going before,] that we may have a good will." (Art. x.) "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ—yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed, and commanded them to be done, we doubt not, but they have the nature of sin." (Art. xiii.) Now holding these doctrines, and inculcating them in her various services, is it possible for any man to believe, that being such as they are here described, men are regarded as fit subjects for the kingdom of God, and the communion of his Church, or does she expect and require a change before they can be admitted to either. Conceived and born in sin, unable to please God ; inheriting a corruption of nature, whereby they are very far gone from original righteousness and inclined to evil—a corruption which deserves God's wrath and damnation—unable to turn themselves to faith, and calling upon God, unable to do works acceptable to God—without the will and without the power to do any thing but what partakes of the nature of sin. Is it not the plain, the necessary inference, that she does and must, require a change of such ? And is this equivalent to a change of heart ?

Does she not require, that they "be born again of the spirit"—that they be "spiritually regenerated"—that, "the grace of God going before, that they may have a good will, and working with them when they have that good will," they "renounce the devil and all his works, and constantly believe God's holy word, and obediently keep his commandments ?" that they possess that "repentance whereby they forsake sin, and faith," (Church Catechism,) by which "only" she declares, "we are justified ?" (Art. xii.) Compared with what the natural condition of man is declared to be, does this amount to change of heart, and experimental religion ?

She instructs us to pray, that God would cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit," (Col. in Com. Service.) that he would "create, and make in us new and contrite hearts," (Collect for Ash-Wednesday,) that "being regenerate and made his children by adoption and grace, we may be daily renewed by his holy spirit." (Col. for Christmas day.) Does this answer to experimental religion and change of heart ? She prays for those who seek to be admitted into her communion, upon the most solemn profes-

sions, and therefore expects that "the old man may be so buried, that the new man may be raised up in them ;" "that all sinful affections, may die in them, and that all things belonging to the spirit may live, and grow in them," "that they may have power and strength to have victory, and to triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh," and also to be indued with Heavenly virtues. (Baptismal service.) Does this resemble experimental religion, and a change of heart? She represents that those who are "delivered from curse and damnation," are called by God's spirit, "through grace they obey the call," "they are freely justified," "they are made sons of God by adoption"—"they are made like the image of his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ," "they feel in themselves the working of the spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things." (Art. xvii.) Is this experimental religion and change of heart? Now these are passages, selected as recollection suggested them, or as they casually met the eye, taken from that standard of doctrine and discipline, to which the ministers of the Church are solemnly pledged to adhere. Neither time nor the limits prescribed to these remarks, will permit a full examination. Sufficient however is here set forth, to show what the Church does "require as terms of communion." We leave it those who charge Episcopalians with their want of them, to decide whether or not these constitute "experimental religion and a change of heart." As "a change of heart" is nowhere required in so many words, in the Bible, if it is not comprehended in the requisitions of the Church, it is difficult to understand what it does mean. Repentance and faith are the terms of salvation which the word of God requires, and if these do not embrace "change of heart," then has no Church a right to make this a term of communion. If they do embrace it, then does the Church clearly require it.

But this charge against the "Prelatical Churches," comes with a peculiarly ill grace from the Congregationalist, whose system does not require, as an express condition of communion, "a change of heart," and by which it has been, and continues to be, in many instances, avowedly rejected. He tells us "the constitution" of his church "is the Bible," "in every case of discipline he resorts to the Bible." But the Bible uses no such language, in prescribing the terms of Church communion or covenant with God. That a "change of heart," is required, in other words, it is true, but the very objection

urged against the Episcopal Church, that the identical phrase is not found in her formularies, applies to the Bible itself. But further, if the Episcopal Church does not inculcate the necessity of "a change of heart," then neither did "the first ministers and Churches" of Connecticut, for they, as one of their own writers informs us, "agreed in doctrine with their brethren of the established Church." "All the ministers," says Neal, "were exactly conformable to the Church of England."—(*Trumbull's History of Connecticut, Vol. I. Chap. xiii.*)

And has not the time been, when "there was a strong party in the colony of Connecticut, who were for admitting all persons, of a regular life, to full communion in the churches, upon their making a profession of the christian religion, without any inquiry with respect to a change of heart—and for treating all baptized persons, as members of the Church?" Among the clergy of the Congregational Church have there not been numbers who have been denounced, by their own denomination as "Arminians, preachers of a dead, cold morality, without any distinction of it from a heathen morality?" Was there never a period in the history of the Congregational Church, when "the great proportion of the clergy were of opinion, that unregenerated men, if externally moral, ought to be admitted to all the ordinances? Was there never a time, nay during the very period of "the celebrated revival of religion," when, to use the language of the same writer, who has been quoted, when "great awakenings, convictions, and joys, and much zeal," in religious concerns, were taken for real conversions to God, when there was no real change—when the heart was left under the dominion of pride and selfishness, and totally opposed to God and holiness—when the clergy admitted many to communion in the Churches, considering those things as an evidence of real change in heart and life, which were no evidence of it at all?* Yes, let who will dare deny it. But God forbid that these things should be repeated as subjects of reproach to all who bear the name.

But radically defective as Congregationalism may be in this essential feature of a pure Church, it is asserted to possess another, to which the "Prelatical Churches," that have "grown in numbers, light, and strength," can lay no claim. "The Congregational Churches" "have received all these, without the aid of civil establishments." And again, "*we* are presenting before the world, evidence

* Trumbull's Hist. Con. Vol. I. p. 311. II .176, 146.

that the Church of Christ can stand without the wealth, and power, and religious establishments of the kingdoms of this world; that the Church of Christ can be sustained by its own inherent excellence, without the interference and aid of civil government." Now, if all this be a test of the integrity of a Church, we may again hope that the Prelatical Church has some claim to a divine character. If there be a Church in Connecticut, which can assert for itself the distinction of its being "sustained by its own inherent excellence," etc. that Church is the Episcopalian. Had "the purest sample" been assailed "by the vulgar brayings of the satirist," it is difficult to imagine what severer strain of irony he could have brayed forth, than that which is uttered in these words. The "Congregational Church" sustained by its own *inherent excellence*, "growing in numbers, light, and strength without the interference of civil governments and the aid of civil establishments." Prodigious! But let us turn from assertion to facts: for it has been already seen that assertions, however boldly advanced, and facts, may materially differ. The subject deserves a moment's consideration, if it be only to show the regard to truth, and thorough acquaintance with its brief history, which characterizes the "Retrospect on the ministry and Church of Saybrook," and to guard the unsuspecting reader against its assertions in respect to more important matters. From the first establishment of the Congregational Church, to a very recent period, it has been compelled to feel the pernicious influence of "wealth, and power, and civil establishments," though not "of the kingdoms," yet of the governments of this world. Fatal to its Christian character as they may be, "the interference and aid of civil government," have been experienced by the Church of the Puritan Fathers. "In no government," to adopt the language of one of their own writers, "have the clergy had more influence, or been treated with more generosity, by the civil rulers and people in general, than in Connecticut." "An early provision was made by law for the support of the ministry, and all persons were obliged by law to contribute to the support of the Church." "The Congregational Churches were adopted and established by law."—(*Trumbull's History of Con. Vol. I. 302.*) Was that an "interference of government," which imposed upon all persons the necessity of contributing to the support of the Congregational Church and ministry, no matter how much dissatisfied with their unscriptural character, unless that which their consciences approved was accessible to afford relief? Yet fifteen

years since, was such the state of things. Was that an "interference of civil government," which assumed, under pains and penalties, to prohibit or regulate the preaching of ordained and licensed ministers—which treated as vagrants, the ministers of Jesus Christ who should presume to preach his Gospel, otherwise than according to law, and who in the service of God refused to recognize the authority of such control? Was that an "interference of civil government," which, without exception, compelled all to support a Church and ministry to which they were conscientiously opposed, which proscribed as a heretic, the peaceful Quaker, and condemned the conscientious Baptist to a fine and the honors of a whipping post, should he presume to administer the sacraments? These are not random inquiries. They are intended to assert, what they specify, and are fully sustained by authentic records. Is this interference or not? Indeed, the whole history "of the established churches," down to a very recent date, is a history of "the interference and aid of the civil government," "of Ecclesiastical assemblies convened under the authority, and at the order of the civil power, to determine matters of faith and order, points of controversy and discipline, not omitting "that memorable Synod," which as its own record will show, was held in compliance with an order of the General Assembly. Even the Congregational "confession of faith," the "heads of agreement" and "articles of discipline," involving the power of proceeding against heresy, and pronouncing sentence of non-communion upon the pastor and people of a church, were submitted to the Legislature for their approbation and establishment, by which it was ordered "that all the churches within this Government, that are or shall be thus united in doctrine, worship, and discipline, be and for the future shall be owned and acknowledged, *established by law.*"*

All this too was done in direct opposition to some of the Churches concerned. And subsequently to this period, let any one read the acts of the government inflicting penalties upon the Congregational bodies themselves, enforcing conformity to what they deemed direct opposition to the Church of Christ—the Saybrook platform,—by threats of transportation, by imprisonment, by seizure of their property, and say that the Congregational Churches have stood without "the interference of the civil government." Yes, Church members

* Act of General Court, holden at New-Haven, Oct. 1708.


were arrested according to law, for refusing to hear a preacher whom they could not approve. Men of the first characters, and unquestionable piety, were condemned as vagrants, spoiled of their property, imprisoned, transported, treated as the vilest wretches, for exercising their conscientious judgment and unalienable rights.

To describe the loose, disordered, and confused state of things, which prevailed while Congregationalism in its purity was practised, and its principles were allowed to be tested by their own merits, would occupy too much space. It presents a condition of things as utterly discordant with the order and peace of the Church of Christ, as lamentable a picture of "opposition, hostility," disturbance of "religious harmony and united order," as any "effort of the adversary," which our eyes have witnessed. Council arrayed against council—Church against Church—the house divided against itself—disputes, dissensions, and endless controversies—all who imagined themselves qualified, intruding into the ministerial office at pleasure—and the most lamentable state of the churches, with respect to their order, government, and discipline, "until the Church of Christ," as one of their writers remarks, "was turned into a mere Babel, and Congregationalists at large abhorred the independency and liberty for which their fathers pleaded :"—All these furnish evidence of the beneficial operation of Congregationalism. They furnished cause too, for the observation of one of the chief "Fathers" of the church, which he made about a week before his death, "we must agree upon constant meetings of ministers, and settle the consociation of Churches, or else we are undone." The advocates of Congregationalism, which it is said Christ himself instituted, upon which the purest sample of the primitive Church is established, were compelled to adopt some of the odious features of detestable Episcopacy. "The church of Christ could [not] be sustained by his own inherent excellence." The interference and aid of the civil government came to its rescue, and stripping it of its glaring defects to save it from complete destruction, led to the adoption of a "more general and energetic government ;" of "an ecclesiastical constitution" of a "mode of sending forth preachers of the Gospel which might obviate the doubt of their being called to the work." Suffice it to say, by an act of the legislature, in which they expressly state, that "from their own observations, and the complaint of many others, being made sensible of the defects of the discipline of the churches of this government," they "ordained and required" those measures which eventuated in the formation of that "mighty bond."

"The Book"—"The law and the testimony"—it would seem, were comparatively feeble, and absolutely inefficient—a more "mighty bond" was necessary—that bond, the Saybrook Platform. Unfortunate Congregationalism! If its friends tell true, twice has it been attempted, and twice has it totally failed. Established by our Divine Master himself, and strengthened by the labors of his Apostles, how suddenly did it expire without a struggle or a groan: and odious Episcopacy rose in strength upon its universal ruins. Revived by "*our* Puritan fathers," and cherished "by their labors and sufferings," how very soon was it, with "the blessings" they bequeathed with it to their decendants, "impaired and adulterated by anti-republican sentiments, in Church and State." How soon did it become "sophisticated by forms of man's devising," and the illusions of magisterial and Presbyterian "impositions." How soon, to preserve itself from impending destruction, was it compelled to seek refuge in the arms of civil government, and sustain its tottering form by clinging to "the monumental pillar."

And did the Saybrook platform prove the mighty bond of union and order? Were not the churches kept in a constant ferment by a refusal to become subject to it? Did not direct defiance, and avowed renunciation of it result in the formation of "the fourth Society of Guilford?" Has not the Cambridge platform been frequently maintained against the Saybrook platform, the respective adherents of each contending with the utmost bitterness, denouncing and denounced, persecuting and persecuted? were there not numbers of Societies, year after year, torn by dissensions, and divided into separate communions? were there no disorders among the ordained and licensed ministers, threatening divisions, and contentions, and the destruction of the ecclesiastical constitution—the Saybrook platform? Yes, all this, and more, have been the happy fruits of that bond of "harmonious intercourse and fellowship," clearly showing that the "adversary" needs not the aid of Wesleyan sentiments, or of Episcopacy, "to raise a storm,"—that "intolerance" is not peculiar to "prelatical power." Such continued to be the condition of things, until the predecessor of him, who is now the pastor of the First Congregational Society in this place, was compelled, in consequence of proceedings instituted under the avowed authority of the Saybrook Platform itself, to declare that "the rights and liberties of all the consociated Churches were at stake."

CONCLUSION.



WITHIN the necessarily brief limits of this reply, the writer has found it impossible to introduce all the testimony which has a bearing upon the subject, or all that he desired. For the same cause, he has been compelled chiefly to confine himself to a simple statement of facts, leaving it to the candid and conscientious reader to estimate their force, and deduce his own inferences. Sufficient, he trusts, has been advanced to place the matter in its true light, and enable the inquirer after truth—him who is content to be guided by the Law and the Testimony, to judge of the merits of the question at issue. Although the prescribed bounds have already been much exceeded, it may not, however, be amiss, to what has been opposed to the attempts at argument, contained in the “half-century Sermon,” to add a few remarks, in reply to its unsustained assertions. If we are really willing, to take for our “direction, the example of Christ and the Apostolic Churches”—if indeed, we entertain any thing more than a professed deference to “the institutions of heaven”—if we are truly satisfied to rest upon an appeal, and to yield implicit submission, to “what saith the Book,” we shall be little disposed to look upon any self-constituted society, however *ancient*, as “the purest sample,” or any sample whatever, “of the primitive Church;” we shall find, that our Lord himself, has established upon earth, *one* Catholic or universal Church, destined to continue to the end of time.*—We shall find, that instead of a covenant of their own devising, the divine institution of baptism by authorized persons, is the appointed means of constituting men members of this Church.† We shall find, that in that Church, “God, by his Holy Spirit, has appointed divers orders of ministers;” “and hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers,” “for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ—till we all come, in the unity of the

* Mat. xvi. 18. xxvii. 20.

† Mat. xxviii. 19. Mark xvi. 16. Acts ii. 41, 47. 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13.

faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"*—designed by divine wisdom, to be perpetuated therefor, until the full purpose of the Gospel shall have been accomplished, "unto the end of the world."† They were given too, with the express intention of preserving the unity of the Church, and the stability of its members, to secure them from "the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive."‡ To the superior order in the ministry, as divinely constituted, belong, as has been fully shown, the supreme power in government, and exclusive authority to ordain. We shall find, that to this Church belong peculiar promises, and privileges, and blessings, even the covenanted mercies of Jehovah. Is Jesus Christ a Savior? "He is the Savior of the body—the Church."|| Hath he "given himself an offering and a sacrifice to God?"§ It is "the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood."¶ "Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself, a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."** Do we need the strengthening and sustaining influences of divine grace? "The Lord—nourisheth and cherisheth—the Church."†† Is Christ, "the head over all things?" He is such "to the Church."‡‡ It is "the Church which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all." "Christ is the Head of the body, the Church." From him "the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth," under that organization of the Church and Ministry, of which the context speaks, "by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together"—"according to the effectual working, in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love."||| Would we unite in ascriptions of glory to the God of all our mercies? "Unto him be glory in the Church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."§§ Is it not then, a momentous question, where is this Church to be found? Can it be a matter of indifference whether or not we are in commun-

* 1 Cor. xii. 28. Eph. iv. 12, 13.

† Mat. xxviii. 20.

‡ Eph. iv. 14.

|| Eph. v. 23.

§ Eph. v. 2.

¶ Acts xx. 28. Eph. v. 25—27.

** Eph. v. 29.

†† Eph. i. 22.

‡‡ Eph. i. 22, 23. Col. i. 24. Eph. v. 23. Col. i. 18. Eph. iv. 16. Col. ii. 19.

Eph. ii. 21.

||| Eph. iii. 21.

ion with that Church ? or can we believe it possible, that the Father of mercies, who has designed such an institution for the benefit of his creatures, and upon communion with it, suspended such immense interests, could have left it totally destitute of every distinctive feature which might be manifest to all ? or can it be, that every characteristic mark of the divine institution, is lost among the conflicting pretensions of rival sects ? And if not, what single important feature of the primitive and divinely appointed Church, does Congregationalism possess ? Can it be pretended, that a society merely human in its origin and institutions—a body of men *associating themselves* together, according to their own views of propriety—originating their own ministry, and adopting their own mode of government, to the exclusion of those divinely instituted, “fully constituted a church of Christ?” Can the members of such an assertion, refusing to acknowledge the divinely authorised ministry—rejecting, as they most decidedly do reject, the institutions and appointments of the Redeemer, and preferring to these the devices and experiments of men, with any show of reason, claim for themselves, that they furnish “the purest sample of the primitive Church?”—or that they are really a Christian Church at all ? As well might they set aside the word of God itself, and for it substitute the “words which man’s wisdom teacheth ;” and contend, because men were edified and profited thereby, that these were indeed the very revelation of God.

We have now seen, upon what grounds, and in the face of what testimony, the assailants of the Episcopal Church have presumed to condemn and denounce it as a work of the adversary. Upon the supposition, that Christ placed all the authority in the Church or body of believers, which he did not ; that Paul exercised no authority over the church, which he most assuredly did ; that Paul and Timothy were ordained by a presbytery, which is incapable of proof—upon the very questionable evidence of an alleged increase of numbers, without reference to the means employed—nay, in decided opposition to scripture truth, and the revealed will of God, do a number of men assert for themselves, the high distinction of being “the purest sample of the primitive Church now in the world”—and denounce a society of professing Christians, who cannot admit their palpable misrepresentations of the word of God, as hostile to the work of divine grace, and opposed to the finger of God. On the one hand, we see a society of very recent origin, founded in opposition to existing institutions, destitute of every important mark of the visible Church

of Christ—within the short period of its existence, already essentially changed from its primitive constitution—such as it is hitherto sustained by the strong hand of intolerance, and secular power—and when that is withdrawn, tottering as our own eyes witness, on the brink of dissolution. On the other hand, from the very age of the Apostles to the present period, has a church subsisted under such a constitution and such a ministry, as the plain letter of scripture sanctions. We behold a church to which “the testimony of the fathers,” and the judgment of the reformers unite in ascribing the characteristics of the primitive church in its government and in its ministry—a church possessing those features which for fifteen hundred years, were unanimously supposed to belong to the church of Christ as originally constituted, and which during that period, did belong to every Christian Church under Heaven—a church, coming down in uninterrupted continuance from Apostolic days to our own time; in reference to which, one minister of the Presbyterian order says, that “no Church in the world came nearer to the form of the most flourishing primitive Church, having observed a middle way betwixt those churches which have failed either by excess or defect;”^{*} and “I defy,” says another, “any man to show me if he can, any other order more suitable, with reason, yea, or better agreeing with Holy Scripture, and of which God hath made more use, for the establishment of his truth, and the amplification of his kingdom.”[†] Appealing to the judgment of any man possessed of an ordinary share of common sense, and candidly weighing the arguments and authorities which are introduced in behalf of the one and the other, the question is left to his decision—which looks most like conformity to the primitive church, and which as opposed to it, is to be regarded as the opposition, the hostility, the work of the adversary? It is asked, it is demanded as a matter of justice, from such as think for themselves, to say, whether with such evidences, our assailants are justified in arrogating to themselves the claim to be “the purest sample of the primitive Church”—or in denouncing us, as a community arrayed against God, and in league with Satan. It is no trifling matter which is at issue. We are what we are represented to be, or we are not. If indeed we be co-workers with “the adversary” of souls, would to God, that we might know it, and under the influence of his Spirit, be led to renounce the base co-operation. If we be not so, then have

^{*}Casaubon.

[†] Le Moyne.

the foulest libels upon our community been promulgated, the basest calumnies been uttered, not only against us, but against the institutions of the Redeemer. Very different was the judgment which the early reformers entertained of the claims of Episcopacy. So far were the founders of the Presbyterian, and other churches, from denouncing, that they fully admitted its divine institution. They plead necessity as the cause of their not adopting it, while they lamented the acknowledged defect. "They acknowledged," says one of their denomination, "that the Episcopal order had signal advantages—that a well ordered Episcopacy had most important and considerable uses, which could not be found in the Presbyterian discipline—that they followed the latter, not for any aversion that they had to the former—not because they held Episcopacy to be contrary to the nature of the gospel, or because they thought it to be less convenient for the good of the Church, or less worthy of the condition of the true flocks of the Lord, but because necessity obliged them to it."* "They were more ready to deplore than defend their own state, and wished rather than hoped, to be made like the flourishing Church of England." "We deny not," says Calvin, "that we want a discipline such as the ancient churches had." "If they would furnish us," says he, "such an Hierarchy, in which the Bishops should be so eminent, as not to refuse to be subject to Christ—then I confess that there is no anathema of which they are not worthy, whoever they may be who would not reverence it and regard it with the greatest obedience."

With no better reasons then, than have been here noticed, do men attempt to persuade themselves that they are guided by the example of Christ and his Apostles, and upon such grounds are they content to peril their spiritual welfare, and hazard their exclusion from all the benefits of God's promises and mercies covenanted to the church of his appointment. Or will it after all be said, that the whole is a matter of indifference? It is the very device of "the adversary" to persuade men that they are in the way of safety, when they are not, transforming himself "into an angel of light," to delude souls to their destruction. And who that wanders from the plain and direct path which the word of God points out, can tell to what extent he is becoming entangled in the snare of the deceiver? When Saul thought, as he supposed, to improve upon the divine direction, was

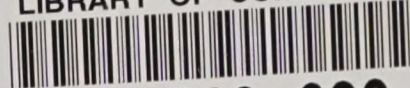
* Du Bose.

he not solemnly admonished of the absolute necessity of yielding unreservedly to the declared will of the most High who requires obedience rather than sacrifice? * When Korah and his company thought to assert the pretended rights and privileges of the people, against the supposed encroachments of Moses and Aaron, were they not made sensible of their grievous sin, and provocation against God, by the most awful visitations of the divine displeasure? † Men may if they please, remain indifferent and “care for none of these things:” they may condemn and revile those that manifest any regard for the positive institutions of the Redeemer; they may denounce as empty formality, that deference to the divine appointments which certainly becomes such weak and short-sighted creatures as ourselves. But all this is as far from proving the denounced to be mere formalists and bigots, as it is from showing the denouncers to be the most spiritual-minded and the most charitable. And they who do all this, may do it at their peril. They may refuse to look upon “the serpent lifted up in the wilderness;” ‡ they may refuse to wash in the waters of Jordan, and think their own “Abana and Pharpar—better than all the waters of Israel” ||—but in a concern so awful as that of the soul’s salvation, § it becomes them to reflect whether any thing, however insignificant it may *appear*—whether any thing which Christ has established, be not materially important; to “be fully persuaded in their own mind” that they are secure in rejecting the ordinances of God. The language of St. Augustine may appear startling to modern ears, and ill accord with the prevailing spirit of indifference and false liberality, yet it is easier to reject than to refuse it. “Whosoever is separated from the church, however worthy of praise he may think himself to live in all other respects, yet by reason of this one wickedness, that he is disjoined from the unity of Christ, shall not have life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

Is it then, needful to offer an apology in behalf of those, who, under such considerations, have felt themselves constrained to reject that which the word of God rejects, and to conform to what that word sanctions? On the one hand, all is conjecture and uncertainty—on the other, all is clear and assured. On the one hand, the most that can be said is, these things may possibly be acceptable to God—on the other, they are in accordance with the divine pleasure ex-

* 1 Sam. xv. † Numb. xvi. ‡ John iii. 14. Numb. xxi. || 2. Kings v. 12.

§ “Out of the visible Church,” says the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, “there is ordinarily no salvation.”



pressly revealed. On the one hand, we have *an invention of men*—on the other, *an institution of God*. And can there be room for hesitation between the two, which to choose? Can he, who *would do the will of his heavenly Father*, who would manifest his filial obedience, by unreserved compliance with the appointments of divine wisdom, for a moment hesitate? No; be “the Church of the living God”—the church of the blessed Redeemer, the rallying centre for “all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.” Planted by his own right hand, she has grown and flourished through successive ages and generations. She has stood firm as the ocean-rock, while “the noise of the waves, and the madness of the people,” and the attempts of her enemies have assailed her in vain. ELEVENTWELFTHS of the whole Christian world, are at this day, enrolled in the ranks of her supporters; and though in many places, these may form but a “little flock,” yet have they no cause for “fear.” Let their personal piety and holiness but be proportioned to their privileges and advantages, and theirs is the assurance of their “Father’s good pleasure, that they shall inherit the kingdom.” Firm in the divine promise, she shall yet endure, when the schisms and heresies which obtain, shall be mingled with those that were. “*The sons of them that afflicted her, shall yet come bending unto her; and all they that despised her, shall bow themselves down at the soles of her feet—owning her as the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.*”

With all due deference to age, which should be respected—with all due veneration for the character of one who “comes in the name of Christ”—I call upon the author of the “Retrospect”—“standing on the verge of the grave”—I conjure him, “standing in the twilight of Eternity”—I solemnly invoke him; I call upon those who have lent their sanction to the bold denunciation, as the creatures of the Eternal, as the ransomed by the blood of Jesus, as probationers for that eternity, whose condition rests upon his word, to pause and reflect. It may be that they have arrayed themselves against the cause of the Redeemer. It may be that they are abetting the enemies of the cross of Christ. It may be, that they are denouncing the Church which Immanuel has redeemed with his blood. In the spirit of Christian charity, I entreat them to retract their bitter aspersions—to consider well the course upon which they have ventured, “lest haply they be found even FIGHTING AGAINST GOD.”

NOTE TO THE READER.—The writer regrets that in consequence of his distance from the press several errors have occurred, which were not discovered until these sheets were struck off.